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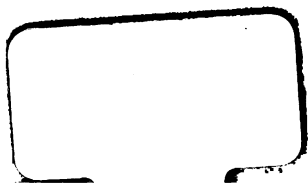
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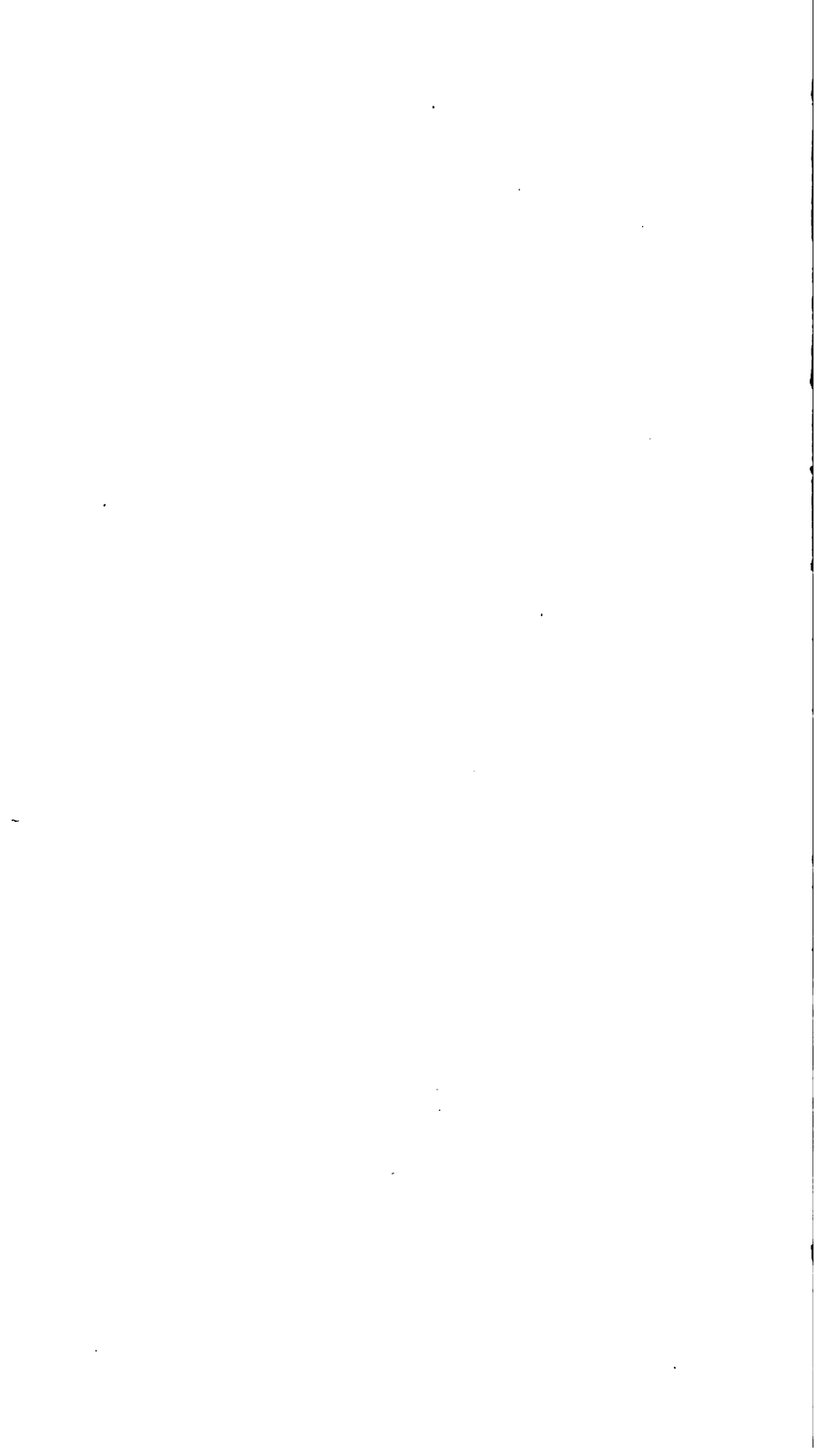


Bertrand  
— DFP —



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## LEWIS XVI.

*Published Jan<sup>y</sup> 1. 1797, by Cudell & Davies, Strand.*

# PRIVATE MEMOIRS

RELATIVE TO THE

LAST YEAR OF THE REIGN

OF

*LEWIS THE SIXTEENTH,*

LATE KING OF FRANCE.

---

By ANT. FR. BERTRAND DE MOLEVILLE,  
MINISTER OF STATE AT THAT TIME.

---

Translated from the Original Manuscript of the Author,  
which has never been published.

WITH FIVE PORTRAITS, FROM ORIGINAL PICTURES,  
OF THE ROYAL FAMILY OF FRANCE.

— *quæque ipse miserrima præ*  
*Et quorum pars* —

*Virg.*

IN THREE VOLUMES.

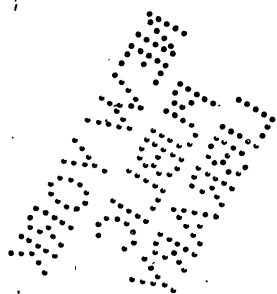
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*THE Publishers are authorised by M. de Bertrand to declare, that the Portraits of the Royal Family of France, given in this Work, are all engraved from Original Pictures, received in presents from their late Majesties ; and that they are, in his opinion, the most faithful Likenesses that have hitherto appeared.*

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The PORTRAITS are to be placed as follows :

LOUIS XVI. to face the Title-page of Vol. I.

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LOUIS XVII. to face Page 42 of Vol. II.

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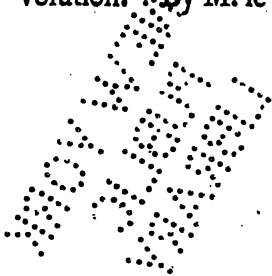
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Page	6. line	14.	<i>for</i> furround <i>read</i> furrounded
	14. —	21.	<i>for</i> 2d, The power <i>read</i> 2d, That the power
	33. —	15.	<i>for</i> insuperable <i>read</i> inseparable
	121. —	9.	<i>for</i> of my intendant <i>read</i> of my being intendant
	163. —	11.	<i>dele</i> état
	182. —	19.	<i>for</i> had named <i>read</i> ought to have named
	329. —	8.	<i>for</i> October <i>read</i> November
	341. —	11.	<i>for</i> others being <i>read</i> others as being
	346. —	13.	<i>dele</i> the comma <i>after</i> increasng
	359. —	14.	<i>for</i> de salut <i>read</i> le salut
		18.	<i>for</i> terme <i>read</i> tenue
	386. —	3.	<i>for</i> par une <i>read</i> pas une
	389. —	18.	<i>for</i> je vous <i>read</i> je vois
	399. —	14.	<i>for</i> c'est un <i>read</i> c'est ce
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PRIVATE MEMOIRS.

## INTRODUCTION.

WHILE I was employed in arranging the various notes and observations which I had made on those incidents of the French Revolution, in which I myself was principally concerned, I had no intention that the following Memoirs should be published during my life. My chief view, in this work, was to do justice to the character of Lewis XVI.; to detect the calumnies invented by the most wicked of men to justify the dethroning, imprisoning, and murdering the most virtuous of kings. Placed in situations that afforded me opportunities of knowing the principles on

which his Majesty acted, and the motives of his conduct at a most important crisis, I consider myself as a necessary witness in the great cause between Lewis XVI. and his murderers, of which posterity is to judge.

My first design was, that those Memoirs should be reserved for the impartial judgment of future ages, as my personal testimony respecting all the facts within my knowledge: but it has been suggested to me since, that those facts would derive a greater degree of authenticity from their being submitted to the contradiction of all contemporaries, who think themselves interested in refuting them; that the truth of these Memoirs may be brought to the test of that cross examination, I have been prevailed on not to defer their publication any longer.

The honour of the French nation loudly demands that all the manœuvres, intrigues, and conspiracies that brought on the present Revolution should be laid open; that all the facts should be known; that the  
real

real criminals should be branded for the justification of the innocent; that the authors of such general calamity and of so many atrocities may not be confounded with their numerous victims. Truth and justice shall trace the line which ought to distinguish and separate the errors which produced and favoured the Revolution, from the horrid crimes which disgraced it. This separation will exhibit on one side but a small number of men, the greatest portion and the most blood-thirsty of the guilty having already been overtaken by the divine vengeance. On the other side will appear the whole French nation, composed of different parties, now more divided by their recollections than by their opinions; for the greatest part being at length enlightened by time and by misfortune; detest those whose exaggerations led them astray; they are now more estranged by the hatred which they suppose in each other, than by that which they really feel; all are harassed by, and disgusted with the Revolution; all feel the necessity of a general union to obtain

the establishment of that order and tranquillity for which they all sigh, and are willing to purchase by reciprocal sacrifices, and by the oblivion of all injuries and resentments. How can they refuse to forget and forgive the consequences of errors, into which almost every individual of the French nation have been led; for there is hardly one who did not wish for some change in the Government, at a period when the minds of men were in such a state of exaltation, that the antient edifice of the Constitution was in danger of being totally overturned, if at all attacked? To vows imprudently made, to the chimerical and ambitious hopes of hot-headed and factious men; to an inconsiderate desire for a new order of things, was owing that general fermentation, of which a class of men, as artful as perfidious, took advantage, to throw all into confusion. Since then every one has, in some way or other, helped on the Revolution, this ought to produce a reciprocal forgiveness, as universal as the errors from which it originated—I say the errors,

errors, not the crimes; for I am far from thinking that certain execrable deeds, objects of everlasting shame and grief to the French nation, will ever be forgiven by it. But fortunately the greatest criminals, the chiefs of the Regicide faction, no longer exist; and among those of their accomplices, who have the misfortune to be still alive, how few there are who were not driven by threats and by terror, rather than prompted by native wickedness, and who would expiate the crime of their cowardice, if remorse could expiate such a crime.

It is known that the Deputy Vergniaux seemed in despair, and passed the whole night immediately after the King's condemnation in tears; and it is probable that the same night was as dreadful to all his colleagues, if we except a small number of consummate villains, who in their absurd ferocity declared in the National Assembly, that Lewis XVI. deserved death for the single crime of being a King, and condemned him merely because they wished to destroy royalty.

In spite of the fermentation, and almost madness, that agitated France after the 10th of August and 3d of September 1792, I am convinced, that if the National Convention had been able to thrust from among them a few sanguinary monsters,—the Robespierres, the Marats, the Cuthons, the St. Jufts, the Collot d'Herbois', the Barreres, &c. &c.—the prevailing sentiment in the Assembly respecting the King, would have been a sentiment of veneration for his virtues, and compassion for his misfortunes; and had it not been repressed by terror from the assassins who surround them, what follows would have been the language, as, I am persuaded, it expresses the feelings of that Assembly: "The monarchy is overthrown, but not by us; it is the effect of that Constitution which, by removing from the throne all strength and all support, rendered its fall inevitable. The public voice, on which all our power depends, now loudly calls for a new order of things: the people, declared free and sovereign, wish  
to

to begin the exercise of their sovereignty: the people call for a republic, and as the call is general, it is our duty to acquiesce, even if their desire were more unreasonable; and their preference of a republican form of government seems the less equivocal, that it has been manifested during the reign of one of the mildest Monarchs, one so worthy of the throne, and so formed for inspiring the people with a love of royalty. But we will impose no hardship that is not indispensably connected with our submission to the will of the nation; we will shew ourselves worthy of being the Representatives of France by our respect for your virtues and your misfortunes, and by our eagerness to record your benevolence, and by doing all justice to your good intentions. Do you yourself choose your future abode, and wherever you go be assured, that you will be accompanied by our sympathy, our love, and our gratitude; and that the republic will ever consider itself as bound by the most sacred ties to secure to you and your family a most honourable retreat. Allow



us calmly to make the most dangerous perhaps, but certainly the most important, experiment that a nation can make ; whatever the event may be, it will decide the great problem respecting the sovereignty of the people, the bounds of political liberty, and whether a steady republican government can be established in a great empire ; we shall at least have the glory of having devoted ourselves for the purpose of giving a great and useful example or lesson to mankind. Advise the foreign States, your allies, not to intermeddle with our affairs ; for if they force us into a war, the whole French nation will unite to punish them, and to shew the world that numerous armies, composed of men inspired with the enthusiasm of liberty, and armed in defence of their rights, are invincible. Above all, advise the royalists not to shew themselves our enemies ; we bear no ill-will to them ; we can never hate those who are your sincere friends ; do not let them prolong, by fruitless efforts, a contest, the issue of which interests them as much as us. If the French people are  
really

really happier under a republican government, than they were under monarchy, your well-known love for them convinces us that their happiness, to a mind benevolent and disinterested as yours, would prove a compensation for your own sacrifices \*. But on the other hand, if our hopes should be frustrated; if it shall be demonstrated by the result of the present trial, that monarchy, prudently limited, is the happiest form of government, and the only one suitable to France; we will be glad to return to our beloved monarch; our hands will rebuild his throne on so firm a foundation, that it shall never more be shaken. We will invest you with a power, whose limits shall be no restraint on the authority of a good King."

Such, I say, would have been the determination of the great majority of the National Assembly after the 10th of August 1792, if they had not been under the in-

\* This was the very sentiment that Lewis XVI. expressed to the Deputy Manuel, when he announced to him in the Temple, that the National Assembly had decreed a Republic.

fluence of terror; if the monsters above enumerated had never existed; and if, as Grangeneuve declared in the Assembly on the 16th of January 1793, if every means that could operate on the minds of men had not been put in force, to draw from them individually the sentence of condemnation against the King, which, after all, was obtained by a very small majority.

If the measure above indicated, as moderate, as prudent, as generous, perhaps, as the circumstances would admit, had been adopted, the National Convention would have disconcerted and disarmed all the opposing parties within the kingdom; and the neighbouring nations, instead of attacking the Revolution, would have contemplated its course with that silent attention and astonishment which a great and important phenomenon never fails to excite.

If the rapacious ambition of any foreign Power had prompted it at that critical period to declare war against France, with a view to seize on some of her provinces, the just cause which the French armies

mies would in that case have sustained, must have secured them victory ; and every Frenchman would at this moment rejoice in their success and participate in their glory.

“ O my countrymen ! whatever have been, whatever are your political opinions, I read in your hearts the sentiments I have just expressed ; I hear your groans on account of the disasters, the horrors that the Revolution has produced. You all wish it were possible to bury them in eternal oblivion. But is this sensibility to exhale in barren lamentations ? and shall your well-founded sorrow for the wrongs which *cannot* be repaired, prevent your adopting the best remedy for those which *can* ? Have at length the courage to be just and consistent \*. Cease to make a crime in some, of what

\* How can the Constitutional Articles, that declare the right of every citizen, without distinction, freely to go out of or remain in France, as he pleases, be reconciled with those decrees which pronounce death and confiscation of goods as the penalties of emigration, without excepting women, children, old men, priests, or even those who had no means of escaping the daggers of assassins, but by flight out of the kingdom ?

you have granted to others as a right. You have proved that citizens may be found in every class worthy of the highest employment in the State by their abilities; let it now be proved that they are deserving of them by their justice, their moderation, and their wisdom, because those virtues are as necessary under a republican government as in a monarchy. Victories enough have immortalized the bravery of the French armies, and proved their immense superiority over those of their enemies. It is not on the Frontiers that the most dangerous enemies of the national happiness are to be found; but among yourselves. Are you not at once attacked by anarchy, the abuse of power, rapacity, jealousy, mutual hatred, by all those passions which excite to crimes, and which endanger liberty and property? Those are the foes you have to overcome. Your harassed country demands no more triumphs, no more laurels at your hands; it requires repose; it requires happiness; neither of which is to be obtained but by a govern-

government essentially founded on justice. It expects freedom, no doubt; and no nation had a better title to expect it; but not that freedom of which Robespierre and Marat were the apostles, and under which it was so long and so cruelly oppressed.

“ The freedom which France requires is that which will secure to each individual the most extensive lawful exercise of all his physical and moral faculties. Find, if you can, the elements of this freedom, or rather the power of producing it in your present republican form of government. Find there the means of rendering the French people of all classes more happy than they were under a monarchical form of government: then, but not till then, will you be able to flatter yourself with having established the republic; because you will then have the general interest to support it. But do not imagine that the present race of mankind can remain any longer in a state of wretchedness and misery, without some other compensation than the uncertain perspective of happiness to be enjoyed by their posterity.

posterity. Weigh with attention the advantages and disadvantages of your republican constitution ; compare them without prejudice with those of the antient monarchy, of the abuses of which I am as great an enemy as any of you can be ; but what necessity is there for re-establishing the abuses ? Compare your present government with a monarchy as wisely limited and regulated as the antient constitution of France might be. When you have calmly made this comparison, and weighed every circumstance, you will be able to decide, whether the most distinguished writers on government, antient and modern, have all been under an error, when they asserted, 1st. That the more extensive and populous an empire is, the more power is required to be placed in the hand of Government :

“ 2d. The power of Government diminishes in proportion to the number of hands which exercise it. The more people there are in any country to command, the fewer will there be to obey :

“ 3d. That popular elections are more favorable to intriguing, restless, and wrong-headed men, than to prudent and virtuous citizens:

“ 4th. That the expence of Administration is infinitely more considerable in a republic than in a monarchy ; because in the first, a greater number must have employments.

“ If all those propositions are erroneous, and if you can demonstrate this, not by words, but by facts, you may in that case bring the majority of the nation to continue to approve of a republican form of government ; but on the contrary, you will do well to remember, that if any one of them is true, the fate of the republic is decided ; and all your efforts, all your talents, and the most despotic measures, will only be able to retard its fall and your ruin a very short time. It is to be hoped then that you will be sufficiently prudent and courageous to behave like real patriots, and not to conceal the truth, but to declare it openly ; and if the prevailing  
desire



desire of the citizens at the approaching primary assemblies, being enlightened by your wisdom and experience, and uninfluenced either by bribery or by terror, should declare for monarchy; if the certainty of finding in the legal successor of Lewis the XVIth the faithful executor of the last will of that good King\*, should determine the nation to restore the ancient throne of the Bourbons; you will have the glory of having prepared and promoted that happy event. France, being thus restored to her King and to happiness, will forget all your past errors, and will remember with gratitude this last blessing which she will receive from you."

Those to whom this is addressed ought not to despise the advice it contains, because it comes from an Emigré; for that Emigré can, with propriety, no more be called an aristocrate than a democrat; he is, what he has always been, a down-

\* "I forgive, with all my heart, those who have become my enemies, without my having ever given them any reason for being so; and I pray that God may forgive them also."

right royalist, and that from a love to his country, having always been convinced that France can never be happy but under a monarchical government. After I was placed in situations that enabled me to know the personal character of Lewis XVI., I confess that my original attachment to monarchy was strengthened by the contemplation of his virtues ; but if ever my country should become more prosperous and happy as a republic than it was as a monarchy, though I should for ever bitterly lament the sad fate of the king and royal family, yet my wishes and prayers for a continuation of the prosperity of France would be as sincere as those of the most ardent republican.

I foresee, without uneasiness, that the publication of these Memoirs will offend the violent of all parties, but I have formed the resolution of making no answer to any attack that may be made against my political opinions. I have freely declared them. I leave them to answer for themselves, and to the judgment of the candid : however, I retain the right of rectifying in the origi-

nal such as may appear hereafter, in my own judgment, to be erroneous. As for the facts which I have related from my own knowledge, for these I think myself answerable. I defy the most violent of my enemies to bring contradictory proof to any one of them ; and I now come under the engagement of bringing the most incontestible evidence of the truth of all that hereafter may be contested.

## CHAP. I.

*A view of the state of France, previous to the assembling of the States General in 1789.—Their convocation absolutely necessary.—The advantages which might have been derived from it.—The causes of the mischiefs which followed.—The character of Lewis XVI.—Of M. de Maurepas.*

THE memoirs of a minister, who remained only five months and a half in power, may be supposed to contain nothing very interesting to history; yet no period of equal duration can present such a number of extraordinary and disastrous events as that which unhappily terminated the reign of the virtuous and unfortunate Lewis the Sixteenth; a few months of which furnish a greater number of important incidents than whole years of the brilliant reign of Lewis the Fourteenth.

These Memoirs are drawn up from notes which I made during and since my administration, of some interesting occurrences, some of which are very little, and others not at all known. I had the best opportunities of being well informed of them, from the particular confidence with which my zeal was honoured by the king and queen, and from my private correspondence with their majesties till the fatal period of the 10th of August 1792.

These events, which I have classed according to their dates, and related with the simplicity and scrupulous truth which ought to characterize history, will assist in completing that of the Revolution, and give a just idea of the various persons who acted a part in its different scenes. But above all, I wish to unveil the real character, the virtues, and imperfections of our unfortunate monarch, whose concessions to his people, and desire to see them happier, was so cruelly and ungratefully repaid.

Had the council at that time been composed of firmer and more enlightened ministers,

sters, the pious intentions of Lewis might have been fulfilled ; not by the extravagant, and at all times dangerous, expedient of changing the government, but by restoring the original vigour to our ancient monarchy, by re-establishing its excellent laws, and by the reformation of abuses which were the consequence of those laws having become obsolete. People of moderation would then have found in this government, so unjustly decried, the basis of a liberty as real and extensive as that which the English are so proud of, and which was secured to us and increased by a more vigilant and active police. We should have found in our laws the prohibition of *Lettres de Cachet*, the necessity of obtaining the consent of the States General in order to establish taxes in proportion to the means of the contributors, the responsibility of ministers and of all the agents of government, the equality of every citizen in the eye of the law; in a word, all that the nation could desire, all that the deputies to the

States General were instructed by their constituents to demand.

This was what ought, and certainly what would have been, effected by the meeting of the States General, had they been firmly retained within their ancient limits, their powers, and their rights, by a minister who possessed the virtues, energy, and abilities of the immortal L'Hopital, whom (as the president Henault observes) we ought to have before our eyes as a model, by which to judge of those who in difficult times dare pretend to fill the same place.

But because the States General produced the most execrable revolution that ever existed, is it Lewis we ought to accuse? After being so unworthily outraged by the guilty authors of this revolution, can he with justice be reproached by its numerous victims? No, certainly he cannot; for no one is ignorant that it was not in his power to refuse assembling the States General; he was forced to it, not only by the universal

versal cry of the kingdom, but by the deplorable imprudence of the parliaments, in declaring “ that they did not represent the nation, as they had hitherto pretended to do ; that the registering the laws could not supply the want of the national consent in matters of taxation ; that they would no longer exert a right which they had usurped, and which conscience and honour forced them to relinquish.”

Shall it be said that the king, though forced to convene the States General, has at least to reproach himself for not having employed ministers capable of moderating and directing their measures ? But situated as he was, how could he be sufficiently acquainted with the characters and talents of men, to enable him to make a better choice ? Can it be forgot, that the king and queen had always an extreme repugnance against Mr. Necker ; that in calling him to the ministry in 1788, their majesties only yielded to the public opinion, and to the unanimous desire of the nation, by which he was considered as the only man capable of re-esta-



blishing public affairs. His second recall, in July 1789, was still less a matter of choice; and this fatal necessity of recalling Mr. Necker gave him the power of forming the ministry as was most agreeable to himself.

The double representation of the Tiers may be justly regarded as one of the principal causes of our disasters. The king is blamed for having consented to it, contrary to the advice of the majority of the Assembly of Notables. But I must observe upon this head, that the people were already prepared for revolt, by the insurrections to which they had been excited six months before: they had been taught to know their own strength, and to despise that of the government; consequently, if instead of consenting to the double representation of the Tiers, the king had embraced the measure of dismissing Mr. Necker, whom the commons then regarded as their zealous protector and as their father, it is more than probable that the people, attributing his disgrace to his popularity, would have risen

risen everywhere in his favour, as they did in the month of July following, and would have equally forced his majesty to recall him, and to grant the double representation of the Tiers Etat. I shall even add, that in such circumstances it would have been very difficult for the king to have avoided being drawn in by the specious reasons which Mr. Necker employed to determine him. He represented to the king, " that the attacks which the parliaments, supported by the nobility, had made on his authority, had almost annihilated it; that the conduct of the clergy, in the first Assembly of Notables, proved but too well that their sentiments and wishes corresponded with those of the nobility and magistracy; that it could no longer be concealed that all those different bodies uniting to demand the convocation of the States General, was less with a view to re-establish the royal authority than to render it quite impotent; that this would be the result of their deliberations, unless the two first orders were bereaved of that weight

weight which the ancient form of convocation gave them in the assembly ; that the only means of attaining this important end was to compose the order of the Tiers of a number of deputies equal to that of the two other orders united ; that no law existed to regulate the number of deputies that each order ought to send ; that there was not an instance of two convocations being uniform in this respect, and therefore the measure he proposed, so far from being irregular, was no more than the exercise of a right which the king always had possessed, of fixing the number of the deputies of every order ; that the third order was greatly interested that the king should have it in his power to protect it from the oppressive enterprizes of the two others ; and that a sense of gratitude for this mark of confidence, as well as a regard for its own interest, would undoubtedly engage the third order to strengthen his majesty's hands, and enable him to re-establish a solid and vigorous government, without which the monarchy was lost." Such were the arguments

arguments which Mr. Necker employed in support of the famous reference to the council, upon which the double representation to the Tiers Etat was granted ; and unfortunately there was not one of the ministers at that time who was capable of firmly opposing this opinion, which the king adopted through the error or the weakness of his council.

It is incessantly repeated, " that all might yet have been prevented, had the king placed himself at the head of his troops, and of his nobility," &c. &c. &c. Of his troops ! Could it be believed that there then existed many regiments that could be depended on, after experiencing the defection of the French guards and the regiment of Flanders, in both of which corps more confidence had been placed than in any other ? Besides, it was known that M. de Bouillé had written to the king, that of one hundred and twenty battalions of infantry, and eighty of cavalry, which he commanded, he could rely on five battalions only, and these were foreign troops.

In

In addition to this, the officers of those regiments the least infected with the spirit of the revolution, all agreed, that the very idea of being attacked by the populace, armed with sticks and pikes, was more terrifying to the soldiers than the army of an enemy ranged in order of battle. With regard to the nobility, although those of its members, who owed most to the court, had basely repaid its favours with revolting ingratitude, and although a great many others had adopted the principles of the revolution, there yet remained many brave and loyal Chevaliers of the old stamp, who would have sought the glory of saving the monarchy at the risk of their own lives. But they were not possessed of sufficient force to insure the success which their loyalty deserved. The king was of this opinion. Ought it to be imputed to him as a crime? Ought he to be reproached, because he would not expose the lives of his most valuable subjects, without a moral probability of success; he, who would never risk the life of the most obscure individual

dividual to secure his own? Nothing can be more just than what M. de Maleherbes said to me one day, in an interesting conversation which will be found in these Memoirs, "that this extreme sensibility, this tenderness of disposition, so amiable in private life, and in times of tranquility, often become, in times of revolution, more fatal to a king, than even certain vices would have been." Thus it was that the errors of Lewis the Sixteenth may truly be said to have originated in a virtuous principle. As to his weaknesses, (for undoubtedly he was not exempted from these,) I do not endeavour to conceal them. In the course of these Memoirs, I more than once lament the indecision of that unfortunate prince; his repugnance to adopt the bold measures which might have saved him; his being deficient in that energy of character, that self-confidence which imposes on the multitude, who are ever ready to believe that he who commands with firmness and an air of authority, possesses the means of enforcing obedience. But I will venture to say,

say, that the very faults above enumerated did not belong to his natural character, but were engrafted upon it by the selfish indolence of M. de Maurepas, that ancient minister, whom the court flatterers were not ashamed to call the Nestor of France, because he resembled Nestor in age; having been discarded in the former reign, he was now recalled to direct the first steps of Lewis the Sixteenth in the career of royalty. Previous to the recall of this minister, the young prince had been noted for an awkward forwardness of manner and impatience of contradiction, through which, however, a goodness of heart and love of justice always appeared. He did not find in his pupil any of those passions so common to his years, but the seeds of all the precious qualities with which Providence endows the minds of those princes who do honour to the throne, and are destined for the happiness of the people. What task could be more easy and honourable than that which this pretended Mentor had to fulfil? His care and attention were not required to

render the young monarch virtuous, but to unfold those virtues he already possessed, and so to direct them, that those qualities which form a great prince might take the lead of those which merely form a man of probity ; to teach him to estimate the talents of men, that he might thereby be empowered to employ them conformably to their abilities. He ought, at the same time, to have given him such an idea of his own powers and resources, as would have inspired him with a reasonable degree of confidence in himself, and have enabled him to act with that steadiness which always creates respect : for a prince of a good understanding, who is conscious of his own value, may sometimes appear superior, but will never appear inferior, to himself.

If M. de Maurepas had consulted the glory and the happiness of France, this would have been the path he would have pursued. But a glory only in prospect, and the happiness of a nation, were enjoyments of too refined a nature for that minister.



nister. He wished to revenge, or at least to indemnify himself, for many years of exile ; and the unlimited confidence which the king placed in him, furnished him with too ample means. His chief endeavour was to keep the king ignorant of his affairs, disgust him with business, extinguish all his energy, and render him an absolute cypher, that he, the minister, might reign in his name. In this manner the first sceptre in Europe became the mere bauble of dotage and indifference. He had persuaded the king, that he ought never to decide upon any measure himself, but always be determined by the opinion of the majority in the council. M. de Maurepas was by this means assured of always having his own plans adopted, not only because the ministers, being nominated by him, would give no opinion contrary to his, but also because he had accustomed them never to carry any important affair to the council, before they had submitted it to his decision, which necessarily became that of the king. In this manner Lewis the Sixteenth, although

although endowed with good sense and a just understanding, acted the passive part in council which M. de Maurepas prescribed to him as the only means of exempting himself from the reproach of being answerable for the faults of administration. On this account, the king took great care never to let his opinion be known, during the discussion of any question of whatever importance; and he was always decided by the opinion of the majority. This conduct of the king's, which made him be accused of total indifference, was therefore owing to a very different principle. The tedium, insuperable from such an insignificant situation, promoted his passion for hunting, where alone he enjoyed full liberty; and the magnificence with which that diversion was conducted at Versailles made him forget the insipidity to which M. de Maurepas had reduced the regal office; and though the king often pushed this exercise to excess, the minister took care not to warn him against it, because he found his majesty more pliant to his counsels when over-

whelmed with fatigue than at any other time. He had so great an ascendancy over this prince's mind, as to render him distrustful of all who approached him; even of those very ministers whom he himself had prompted the king to appoint; and while he declared it impossible to choose any more unexceptionable, he allowed no opportunity to escape of depreciating their talents and their characters, and continually admonished the king to be upon his guard against their views, their intentions, and all their measures.

This general distrust, which M. de Maurepas infused and carefully cherished, for about eight years, in the king's mind, had taken such deep root, that it ever afterwards adhered to him; for even in the most dangerous and critical moments of his life, when his security depended upon it, he never could be persuaded to place full confidence in the zeal and fidelity of his most devoted servants.

M. de Maurepas deserves also the severest blame for neglecting to employ any means

to correct the king's excessive timidity, which almost deprived him of the power of speech when he was in company with people whom he was not in the habit of seeing every day. His restraint, upon those occasions, made him forget, for the time, things which he was perfectly well acquainted with, although he possessed a very happy memory. M. de Maurepas certainly might in a great degree have corrected this weakness, at all times a great inconvenience, but at this particular time dangerous to the throne; but so far from remedying the evil, M. de Maurepas increased it by his satirical raillery at the rough abruptness of the king's manner, and upon what some of the courtiers had the insolence to call "*ses coups de bouoir*". Ah! if he had indeed been capable of giving such severe blows, how much is it to be wished that he had directed them against those false, ambitious, and ungrateful men; those traitors, whose base and perfidious plans have brought on a

\* A vulgar expression, the literal sense of which is, "the blows of a boar's tusk."

revolution, the details of which are so shocking, that if we had found them in a history of the most barbarous nation, we should have supposed them greatly exaggerated ; a revolution, which has been justly compared to the irruptions of a frightful volcano, announced by a hollow awful murmur, and by the shaking of the neighbouring mountains, finally bursting forth in torrents of fire, spreading death and desolation all around.

In following up this comparison, it may be said, that if the indifference and selfishness of M. de Maurepas excited the fermentation of the impure elements of the revolution; the incapacity and extravagant violence of the archbishop of Sens conducted the king and the monarchy to the mouth of the volcano, and the ambition and foolish vanity of Mr. Necker precipitated them into it. As the connection which I had with the two last-mentioned ministers, in the year 1788, when I was intendant of Brittany, and the events which took place in that province, where the revolution actually began,

began, may throw some lights upon its origin and first progress; I will succinctly enumerate the particulars in these Memoirs, because a knowledge of the symptoms which were the forerunners of this too memorable catastrophe are not less interesting or less useful than that of its consequences.

## CHAP. II.

*Character of the archbishop of Sens.—The King's opinion of him.—First Assembly of Notables.—Intrigues to overturn M. de Calonne's plans.—Their success.—The archbishop of Sens appointed first minister.—Project of reformation in the magistracy.—Motives of my repugnance to concur in this scheme communicated to the chancellor.—His dissimulation.—My departure for Brittany with M. de Thiard.—His character.—Arrival of orders from the king.—I send my resignation.—The minister's answer.—A capital fault of the archbishop of Sens.—Reflections.*

**M**ONSIEUR de Brienne archbishop of Sens, who had long ardently aspired to the ministry, had always been kept out, in spite of the high reputation of his talents, upon account of the bad opinion which the king entertained of his morals and principles. When it was proposed to his majesty to receive this unworthy prelate (at that time archbishop of Thoulouse) into

into the council, the pious prince answered with indignation, "The man does not believe in God." The prelate being apprized of the motives of his majesty's repugnance, which were but too well-founded, flattered himself that he should be able to obviate them. He endeavoured to give an impression of his conversion, by appearing entirely devoted to the cares of his diocese, and by practising, from time to time, some of those public acts of charity which are always cried up, with exaggeration, in the public papers. This edifying course of good works was interrupted by the death of the archbishop of Paris, M. de Brienne never once doubting but that his reputation was so perfectly well established, that he should now be esteemed a worthy successor to one of the most virtuous prelates in France. He accordingly offered himself as a candidate, and supported his pretensions by the well known credit and intrigues of the Abbé de Vermont. But the king was of opinion, that a belief in the Supreme Being could still less be dispensed with in an archbishop of Paris, than in a



secretary of state, and therefore preferred the virtues of M. de Juigné to the supposed talents of M. de Brienne. Indeed it has but too evidently appeared since, that he possessed no other talent but that of doing mischief; and in fact, he did more, and in less time, than the most ignorant, or even the most perfidious minister that ever existed in France or any where else.

The convocation of the first assembly of Notables, in the year 1788, opened a new prospect to the ambitious hopes and intrigues of the archbishop of Thoulouse. He saw that in the present circumstances, the only chance he had of rising to the ministry depended upon his being able to form a party in the assembly, sufficiently powerful to overturn M. de Calonne, who was the minister in greatest credit, and author of a new system of administration, which was at that time laid before the assembly. The archbishop prepared his batteries accordingly. The proportional contributions to all taxes, and the alienation of honorary rights depending on benefices were the principal measures which M. de Calonne

Calonne proposed to this assembly, in which the clergy had great weight. This attack upon ecclesiastical property offered a favourable opportunity for the enemies of the minister to excite the most violent opposition against him and his schemes, not only in the assembly, but also at court and in the capital. He was so powerfully attacked in so many different ways, that his disgrace seemed inevitable. His fall was accompanied with that of the Chancellor, (Hue de Mirosmeuil,) who, after giving his approbation and support to the plans of M. de Calonne, had the weakness to abandon him, and join his adversaries.

In this manner the king was drawn on by a combination of circumstances, and reduced to the unhappy necessity of forming a new council, and of abandoning the reins of government to the archbishop of Toulouse\*. This ambitious man was not contented with occupying the situation from

\* M. de Fourqueux was the immediate successor of M. de Calonne; but his ill health prevented his retaining his place longer than three weeks.

which

which he had precipitated M. de Calonne; he never rested until he was named the principal minister, and had supreme influence in the departments of all the other ministers, who, some from fear, and others from incapacity, became all the passive instruments of his destructive genius.

The greatest error the king could be guilty of was to dismiss M. de Calonne, before he had put an end to the assembly of Notables. It must be acknowledged, that this fatal determination, followed by the nomination of the archbishop of Sens to the ministry, was the immediate cause of the revolution. Upon this occasion, the Queen entirely gave way to that prejudice which the ambition of the archbishop of Sens, and the hatred of the Baron de Breteuil, inspired her with against M. de Calonne. Her majesty must have bitterly regretted that she ever employed her influence over the king's mind to ruin that minister. As I have as much reason to complain of him as to praise him, I might, without being suspected of prepossession,

either

either write an eulogium or a criticism on his conduct, if the one and the other were not equally foreign to the object of these Memoirs. I shall only observe, therefore, that in spite of the vague and violent declamations echoed from all parts of the kingdom against this minister, he certainly did nothing to justify the hatred and malice with which he was persecuted. And it is but fair to state, in his vindication, that although the archbishop of Sens and Mr. Necker exhausted all their efforts, assiduously examined all the papers relating to his administration, yet they never could find the smallest proof of those heavy charges which have been urged against him.

If M. de Calonne could have foreseen that the king would not permit him to close the Assembly of Notables, he certainly would not have proposed its convocation; but his too great security was his chief error. He was desirous of having his plans adopted by this Assembly, being convinced that he could demonstrate their utility to all who  
would

would listen to argument, and disregard those who opposed him less from conviction than from motives of vengeance and personal enmity : and he had the imprudent integrity to include in the list of Notables almost all the members of the clergy, nobility, and the magistracy, who, to his knowledge, were ill-disposed to him.

To have had nothing to fear from an assembly thus composed, and to have derived all the advantages which were expected from it, there was only one line to be pursued ; namely, to have waited patiently until the committees had finished their deliberations, all the while expressing the utmost gratitude to the individual members for their zeal and sagacity. However ill disposed some of them were, with respect to M. de Calonne, not one of them was capable of giving a better plan than his. It would be difficult to have any doubts on this head, as it has since appeared that the Archbishop of Sens and Mr. Necker could do no better than slavishly follow the line their antagonist had traced.

It is also worthy of observation, that amongst all M. de Calonne's enemies, there is not one whose perfidy has not been unmasked in the course of the revolution, and whose name is not inscribed in the list of the authors of the disasters of France; while he himself has acquired new rights to the esteem and gratitude of all good Frenchmen; by his indefatigable zeal and unlimited sacrifices for the cause of monarchy.

An account of the administration of the archbishop of Thoulouse, (who became archbishop of Sens, and afterwards a cardinal,) being no part of my plan, I shall content myself with observing, that no man's real character seems ever to have been more misunderstood. He was supposed to possess energy, because he was violent; learning, because he was positive; genius, because he had vivacity; talents for governing, because he criticised the administrations of all his predecessors. His friends and adherents, however, have since been sufficiently convinced of their mistake, by the weakness of his resources, by his ignorance, by the incoherence

herence of his ideas, and the absurdity of his measures.

After having exhausted the royal treasury, drained every resource, annihilated public credit, and ruined the powers of the crown, by employing, upon the slightest occasion, those acts of royal authority which should be only resorted to upon the last extremity, such as *lits de justice*, *lettres de cachets*, the banishment and imprisonment of the magistrates, he at length, with boldness, but without consideration, attempted to free the government from the restraint of enregistering the laws in the sovereign courts of the kingdom, and of supplying this by enregistering them in a new court, called *Cour Plénier*, which he pretended to *re-establish*, although no such court had ever existed in France.

To give to this edict some degree of splendor, he united with it several other laws relative to the courts and administration of justice, containing reformatations of the utmost importance. By one of the new laws, all the sovereign courts of the kingdom

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dom were interrupted till further orders, to prevent remonstrances and protests against that rash regulation.

The cardinal was extremely vain of having conceived this last part of the plan, which he imagined was a stroke of genius, and he wished to prevent its transpiring till the moment of enregistering the edicts; this was intended to be done by a *lit de justice* at Paris, and by royal commissioners, at the same instant, in all courts of the kingdom. As it would have been necessary to have trusted a great number of clerks, if the orders had been forwarded from the offices, according to the usual custom, a secret printing-house was established at Versailles, and the printers were shut up and watched like prisoners till the decrees were printed.

The important day, for the universal enregistering the edicts, being fixed upon, the king's commissioners received orders to set out instantly for all the cities in the kingdom, where there existed sovereign courts of justice, and to remain there till they received



ceived his majesty's farther orders and instructions. In the mean time, great pains were taken to conceal the business in agitation. This was so much attended to, that the orders for the *départure* of the intendants passed through the office of the minister of finance, to make it imagined that it related to some matter of that nature. But in reality, neither the minister of finance, nor any other minister, except the *Garde des Sceaux*, (Lamoignon,) were in the secret.

At the time I received orders for my departure, it was generally suspected at Paris that the chief object of the archbishop of Sens was some great reformation in the magistracy; and it being contrary to my principles to accept of a commission, without knowing its import, I took occasion, from the above report, and from my misunderstanding with the parliament of Brittany, to explain myself to M. Lamoignon. I expressly told him, "that if the intended alteration was directed against the parliament, its success, no less than my delicacy, required

required that some other should be employed in Brittany ; for if I accepted the commission, it would never be doubted but that I was the author of the measure, and had sought this occasion of revenge ; and that such an idea would irritate people's minds so much against me, that my services in that province would be more prejudicial than useful." He answered without hesitation, that I was alarmed without cause ; for that the order for my departure being drawn up by the minister of finance, there was reason to believe that the object of my commission regarded the business of that department only ; " and you may be assured," added he, " that I have no hand in your being sent." My uneasiness was dissipated by this positive assurance ; and I set out for Brittany in the end of April, with the Count de Thiard, who was as ill-informed as myself of the object of our commission.

The Count de Thiard was one of the most amiable men of the court. It was impossible to have more sweetness of disposition,

sition, a more pleasing and easy style of conversation, or a more dignified and graceful manner, than he possessed. He was generally beloved, and his company sought after in all the agreeable societies of Paris and of the court ; but he was the man of all France least calculated for business. It tired him to death. He even could not comprehend its language. He was several years commander in chief in Provence, where he was adored, because he had no duty to perform that was either difficult or disagreeable. It seemed as if he resided there for no other purpose than to give balls and entertainments, of which he did the honours perfectly well. One of the greatest blunders the court could have committed, was to send a man of this description, who hated trouble, to a province, which, even in ordinary times, had been considered as the most troublesome to govern of any in the kingdom ; but in times of insurrection, this command ought to have been given to a man inured to public affairs, and capable of overawing the seditious by the vigour of his

his character. It was perhaps imagined, that the amiable qualities of M. de Thiard would have compensated for that force of character in which he was deficient; but this kind of compensation never succeeded in Brittany. The weakness of government, or of its agents, was always extremely dangerous in that province. The only successful method of executing the king's orders was to proceed in one steady course, without being moved by the clamour of turbulent spirits, or even by scissions, if they came to be again in vogue\*.

During

\* Scission was a term made use of in the provincial parliaments and assemblies of the states, importing, that the members of the parliaments or assemblies had broken off all communication, of a private or social nature, with the intendant or commandant of the province. A scission was never announced until it had been formally deliberated on in a general meeting of the members. The motives were sometimes of a public and important nature, as the registration of a law by the express order of the king; at other times, the causes assigned were rather frivolous, such as an expression used in a private society, and construed in a bad sense; omitting some mark of attention, which, it was thought, ought to have been paid to certain individuals, as attending them to the door, or inviting them to entertainments. But as the members of those assemblies often stood in need, for

During our journey to Rennes, I communicated to M. de Thiard what had passed between the chancellor and myself; and I did not conceal my intention of informing the first president of it. I had also resolved to announce my arrival to the members of parliament, although their scission with me might have excused me from this ceremony, which was usual when an intendant arrived in the province for the first time, or after having been for any considerable time absent. I waited accordingly on the president, and after giving him an account of my conversation with the chancellor, I expressed my unalterable attachment to the sound principles of the magistracy, and assured him, that it would give me real concern to see them attacked, if, notwithstanding M. de Lamoignon's assurances, there was any truth in the report concerning the archbishop of Sens's project.

themselves or their relations, of the good offices of the intendant or commandant, who had nothing to ask or expect in return, and generally kept the best tables and the best wine in the province, it will not be difficult to determine who were the greatest losers by the scission.

This

This conversation, of which the president gave an account to his company, and the visits I paid the same day to all the members of parliament, made the scission be taken off immediately, and obtained me innumerable deputations and compliments.

We had been about five days at Rennes, when a courier of the cabinet arrived, with an enormous packet for us. This packet contained several others, some of which, to the number of eight or nine, were only to be opened in the *Assemblée des Chambres*, which we were ordered to convene on the following day; and the other dispatches were to be read at the end of the deliberation. The king's orders, which were addressed to us, did not contain any explanation of the nature of the measure with which we were charged; they only regarded the magistracy and the administration of justice: but the cover of one of the largest packets, which, from the form, seemed to contain *lettres de cachet*, was a little torn by the motion of the carriage. I could not resist my

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curiosity

curiosity to know whether or not my conjectures were well founded. I tore it a little wider, in the presence of M. de Thiard, who was no less curious than myself, and I discovered that this packet contained only *lettres de cachet*, and that they were destined for the members of parliament.

No more was requisite to convince me that M. de Lamoignon's assurances (upon the faith of which I left Paris) were insincere. But as this was not the case with the declaration I made to him, I immediately determined to send in my resignation, by a letter which I read to the first president, and to the bishop of Rennes, who happened to be at M. de Thiard's house when I wrote. My letter was sent the same day by an extraordinary courier, and the bishop of Rennes set out for Paris, to remonstrate with the archbishop of Sens, imagining that he had sufficient influence to prevail upon him to renounce, or at least defer, the measure relating to Brittany, till the next convocation of the states of  
this

this province ; but he was not listened to ; and I received from M. de Lamoignon the following letter :

“ I shewed your letter to the king, Sir ; his majesty desires me to inform you, that he commands you, in the first place, to execute his orders, under pain of disobedience ; and he will afterwards determine concerning your resignation.”

This order embarrassed me extremely, from the difficulty there was in reconciling its execution with what was expected of me by the parliament and the public, who were informed of the circumstances of my resignation. My only resource was in M. Thiard's ignorance of the duties which both of us had to discharge at the *Assemblée des Chambres*, and also of the terms in which our orders were expressed upon this article. It was repeated, in almost every page, that “ the king's first commissary, and in default of him, his second,” should give such and such an order, and should pronounce such a decree, &c. I concluded, that in quality of the king's *second commissary*, I



had merely a passive part to act in the assembly, and that my presence was only necessary to supply the place of the first commissary, in case of his sudden death or sickness. I knew very well that this was contrary to the custom; but happily M. de Thiard, who never had been engaged in affairs of this kind, was ignorant of it. My reasons appeared to him very good, and conformable to the tenor of our orders. He did not make the least difficulty on this account, but only begged of me to give him an exact note in writing, of all that he should have to do and to say in the parliament, of the responses which it was easy to foresee would be made to him, and what he ought to say in return. I wrote this note upon the spot, and made it as clear as I possibly could; but he did not find it such as he desired, and begged of me to write another, in such a manner that he should only have to read over what I wrote. In short, he required a dramatic scene, and the part of every actor so clearly specified as to prevent all mistakes. I set about this task, and made

his

his part so plain, that a child of six years old, who could read, would not have been embarrassed ; and accordingly M. de Thiard was perfectly satisfied.

The greatest, and perhaps the most fatal error, which the archbishop of Sens committed, as it commenced the disorganization of the army, was his setting almost all the troops of the kingdom in motion, with a view of overawing the people by a great appearance of force, and of preventing insurrections in the towns where his imprudent measure was to be executed. He did not reflect, that discovering to the people that an insurrection is thought possible, suggests to them the idea that they are feared, and by this very means renders them formidable. Undoubtedly government ought always to be in a situation to repress and punish insurrections ; but if, instead of employing the usual means, in the prudent manner that a well-regulated police affords, it begins by what is its last resource, and ought never to be adopted except in the utmost extremity,

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by exhibiting the whole armed force before the eyes of the people at once, the multitude are soon familiarized to what was intended to impress them with terror; they see the utmost force that can be brought against them, they compare it with their own numbers, and are inspired with courage, from a conviction of their own superiority. Thus many regiments may have less effect, than a detachment of fifty dragoons, under more prudent management, would have had. In the year 1771, the duke of Fitzjames employed only three brigades of *Marechassée* to consummate, in Brittany, the most absolute, and perhaps the most arbitrary act of authority which was ever exerted in France; namely, the suppression of all the parliaments of the kingdom, and the installation of new judges; and the king's commands were fully executed, without causing the least popular commotion. No one even dared to murmur upon the occasion. It will be seen, in the following chapter, that M. de Thiard, with  
much

much more considerable means, was employed to carry a much less violent measure in the same province, and failed in a manner that proved fatal to the royal authority.

## CHAP. III.

*Assemblée des Chambres.—Arrival of the king's commissaries in the Palais.—Riot of the attorneys' clerks.—Difficulty which the king's commissaries found to enter the Grand Chambre.—An account of what passed at this sitting.—Retreat of the king's commissaries.—The insults which they received.—Insurrection of the people.—Violent excesses committed against the soldiers.—The arrival of fresh troops at Rennes.—The inutility of this measure.—Its consequences.*

THE Chambres being assembled on the 10th of May, at eight o'clock in the morning, according to the king's orders, I went there along with M. de Thiard. We were escorted by his guard, and by a detachment of the regiment of Rohan. The troops were ranged on both sides of the street as we went to the palace. The profound silence which prevailed for some time,

as we moved along, was soon interrupted by hisses, and the noise of catcalls from the windows, which were repeated by the mob in the street, who became more daring and noisy when they observed that the soldiers took no notice of them.

M. de Thiard had not placed any troops within the walls of the Palais, having been assured that such a measure was absolutely unnecessary, and that the parliament would be extremely flattered by this mark of confidence. But the consequence was, that we found the halls, and all the passages to them, crowded with young people, most of them attorneys' or lawyers' clerks, who received us with the most insolent clamour of hissing and hallooing. We were so surrounded, that we found some difficulty in gaining the door of the great chamber. After knocking a full quarter of an hour, without obtaining admittance, we went to another door, accompanied by a croud of the spectators, who laughed at our embarrassment, and their mirth increased when they saw that our attempts to enter at the second door were equally unsuccessful.

cessful. We next went to the *Parquet*\*, where we found some of the *gens du roi*. M. de Thiard complained, with great mildness, of the incivility of the clerks belonging to the palace, and of the obstacles we found in entering. He begged of the attorney-general to give notice to the president of our arrival, and to let him know that we waited for entrance, until he should order the huissiers to open the door. A quarter of an hour elapsed without our receiving any answer. We sent a second message, and at the same time M. de Thiard gave orders to the commanding officer of the regiment to send the grenadier company to the palace. We waited another quarter of an hour; after which, the assembly being informed of the order given to the grenadier company, gave us to understand that we must send our request in writing.

Notwithstanding the irregularity of this demand, after a moment's pause, we sent the request in writing, as they required, and we went again to the door of the Grand

\* The *Parquet* is a large room in the Palais, where the king's advocates and attorneys assemble.

Chambre. In our way, I was informed by a confidential person, that notice was given to all the tradesmen in town to assemble in the square of the Palais at three o'clock, armed with cudgels, the instruments of their professions, and in the best manner they could. He added, that very violent projects were formed. It immediately occurred to me, that one means of oversetting these projects, and the best which could be adopted in the present circumstances, would be to abridge the seance, by having the laws registered in the short manner that registrations are made in the *lits de justice*; namely, by writing only the first and last line, and leaving a blank space between them sufficient for inserting the whole afterwards. I proposed this matter to M. de Thiard, who approved of it, and desired me to write it down in his paper of memorandums.

The door of the Grand Chambre was at last opened to us; but M. de Thiard had previously ordered the officer of the grenadier company to oblige all strangers to withdraw,



draw, and allow none to enter afterwards. When we had taken our seats, M. de Thiard pronounced a few sentences, expressive of his regret in being forced, by the king's orders, to execute a commission which might perhaps be disagreeable to the parliament, though he was himself ignorant of the object of it. And I immediately afterwards said, that "notwithstanding my having received the king's express commands to assist at this sitting, I was happy in having no part to perform on the present occasion, as his majesty's commissioner, and in being allowed the place I was entitled to in the assembly as *maître des requêtes*, which I would be ever proud to deserve, by my inviolable attachment to the magistracy and the laws, to which the true interest of the king could never be in opposition."

I had all M. de Thiard's papers before me, and also all the packets containing the laws to be registered; and while he was pronouncing his speech, I took that opportunity to write upon his memorandum the form of the order of registration, *by the first*

*and last line.* After having written this for his instruction, I ostentatiously put another paper, which I held in my hand, into my pocket; and to make those who saw me writing imagine that I was only taking a note of the exact time when the seance began, I had looked at my watch the instant before I began to write. I placed all the papers, regularly numbered, before M. de Thiard, so that he could make no mistake, if he only took up the first that lay nearest his hand. I thought I had so well provided against all difficulties which might occur, that I should have nothing to do or to say in this sitting. M. de Thiard could have conducted it without difficulty, by simply adhering to his written instructions. Indeed, a person of the lowest capacity could hardly have been embarrassed; but M. de Thiard's extreme politeness carried him so much beyond the proper bounds, in the very opening of the assembly, that I was forced, for a moment, to relinquish the passive part which I had intended to act. When he read the order of *registration by the first and last line,*

there arose a slight murmur in the assembly, which I did not inquire into the cause of ; but I thought it necessary to observe, that this method of registration was constantly adopted in the *lits de justice*. Here M. de Thiard, carried away by his natural complaisance, and forgetting his instructions, very politely proposed to the assembly to have the registration made out in the usual way, if that was more agreeable to them. Thinking it necessary to cut the matter short, I immediately said aloud, to M. de Thiard, that the assembly could not make any reply to his proposition, because, before they did, it would be necessary that they should deliberate ; but that he had already deprived them of that power by declaring the king's order, which expressly interdicted all deliberations.

M. de Thiard's incapacity for business, or at least his ignorance of forms, was now evident to the assembly, and they endeavoured to take advantage of it. The first clerk, either of himself, or by the advice of some of the members, refused to register  
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*by the first and last line*, and began to transcribe the whole law which had just then been pronounced. After three quarters of an hour had elapsed, without his returning to his seat, I began to suspect what was passing, and gave M. de Thiard a hint, upon which he summoned the clerk, and asked what had detained him. He answered, that the transcription was not finished. M. de Thiard, finding that it was not executed according to his orders, renewed his injunctions, under pain of disobedience; but this produced no effect. The clerk being again summoned, and interrogated upon the motives of his disobedience, declared that he would not execute the order, unless it was given him in writing. The form of this order was simple; but M. de Thiard, who had never written one of that kind, desired me to dictate it to him. I said to him, that he had only to write his name and titles at the head of the order which he had already pronounced. One of the members of parliament ardently wished that the sitting might be

prolonged till the mob had time to assemble in the square of the palace; and he could not forgive me the crime of having disappointed his views, by the advice which I gave M. de Thiard upon this occasion. He threw several notes out of the window, to inform the public what passed in the assembly. One of them contained these words : " The intendant is the cause of all the mischief. He is a monster who must be killed \*."

All difficulties being at last surmounted, the sitting continued without further inter-

\* M. de Coudic was the name of the member who wrote this note. I name him, to prevent others from being suspected of so unworthy an action. The man, unfortunately, was not quite mad enough to be shut up. I say unfortunately, because in times of public fermentation it is under men of this description that the multitude arrange themselves, and are carried to the most desperate acts of violence. M. de Coudic, misled by parliamentary fanaticism, was the chief instigator of all the troubles which took place in Rennes, from which the revolution in reality began. Immediately upon its breaking out, he became one of its most furious demagogues. He afterwards came to London, where he associated himself with some of the most seditious clubs, and where he died, after having published a furious and extravagant pamphlet against monarchical government.

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ruption, and broke up at half past twelve, to the great surprize of the public, who were just then informed, by the arrival of the courier from Nantes, that the same measure, in the Chamber of Accounts, had detained the assembly there thirty hours; and it was known a few days after, that it had taken up nearly the same time in all the sovereign courts of the kingdom, from its not having occurred to any of the commissioners to employ the expeditious form of registering by the first and last line.

In consequence of the order which had been given, of admitting nobody into the palace, there were few assembled at the gate, and a profound calm prevailed when we came out. M. de Thiard concluded that the same tranquillity prevailed all over the town; and he gave orders to the detachment, who waited to conduct us, to remain in the square, as we had no occasion for an escort. We were only attended by the guard of the commandant, which consisted of about eighteen or twenty men at the utmost. As long as we were in the street

which goes immediately from the square, where the regiment of Rohan was stationed, the fear it inspired preserved us, thus far, from being insulted otherwise than by hissing and whistlings, accompanied by the cry of *baro* from the people who surrounded us. M. de Thiard mistook this for the usual cry of *vive le roi*; but hardly had we turned into the street which leads to the *Hôtel du Gouvernement* than he was undeceived; for the hisses and cries redoubled, and were followed by a shower of stones, levelled, at first, at our chairs, which were carried after us: but the attack soon became more direct, which did not, however, prevent us from moving forward in the same order. I was saluted on the head with a large stone, which would certainly have extended me motionless in the street, if it had been directed in full force against me; but having been originally intended for M. de Thiard, his servant interposed his arm, which saved his master, and undesignedly sent the stone against me. I was for some time stunned; but when I recovered my senses, and saw the  
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the size of the stone, I was very thankful that I had come off so well. M. de Thiard's servant was incapable of using his arm for several months. The croud now began to increase, and pressed so near us, that we were forced to precipitate our retreat in some disorder. We got into the hotel of the commandant without any further accident, a military detachment having met us near the hotel, and fortunately prevented the populace from overtaking us. The soldiers, however, were forced to point their bayonets, to stop some of the boldest of the multitude from bursting in ; which, after all, they would probably have effected, had not a young officer rushed, quite unarmed, betwixt the people and the bayonets, to prevent the effusion of blood. This generous action produced a very happy effect, by the turn it gave to the sensations of the people. In their enthusiastic admiration they seized upon the officer, raised him in their arms, with repeated acclamations of praise. That part of the mob, who were most distant from the scene, not knowing



what had taken place, concluded that the officer, whom they saw elevated, was an enemy to the people ; on which they began to throw stones with great fury, and the young man was slightly wounded in the forehead. When the people immediately *around him* saw the blood flow, they gave him all the assistance in their power, with every expression of sympathy. In short, he so completely occupied them, that the *Cour Pleniere* and the king's commissioners were for some time forgotten.

The capital error which M. de Thiard committed, and what immediately occasioned the insurrection, was the order he was known to have given to the troops not to make any use of their arms, except to intimidate ; for he had directed, that the soldiers should put the rammers into the barrel of their firelocks in sight of the populace, to prove clearly, in case they should have harboured any suspicion of being fired upon, that no harm was intended. Having received this pledge of their security, the mob became insolent and outrageous in the  
highest

highest degree, while the soldiers, on the other hand, were intimidated and passive, suffering themselves to be cuffed and kicked, and even allowing their arms to be taken from them, without attempting retaliation or resistance. In short, a party of sixty armed soldiers were so obedient to the orders of remaining passive, as tamely to allow their sentry-box to be broken in pieces by an inconsiderable mob, and they themselves to be beaten and wounded by the broken pieces of this very box.

The people were emboldened to these excesses, rather from the impunity with which they were permitted to act, than from any idea they had of their own strength. At first the disorder might have been suppressed, if M. de Thiard had given orders aloud to charge immediately, and fire upon those who did not disperse at the first warning; but most unfortunately, he thought it would be better to endeavour to overawe the people by a more considerable appearance of force; and that very night he dispatched couriers to St. Malo, with orders for fresh battalions

of infantry, a few squadrons of cavalry, with some pieces of artillery, to march immediately to Rennes. This little army would certainly have been sufficient to ransack the town, and exterminate the inhabitants ; but as the character of M. de Thiard was too well known for him to be suspected of having such designs, the arrival of those troops, so far from terrifying the multitude, only rendered the insurrection more general, and augmented the mortification and disgust of the soldiers, who were full of indignation at the despicable part which they had been made to act.

## CHAP. IV.

*Assemblies held in the Chambre des Lectures.*

*—Consequences of these assemblies.—Imprudent conversations of M. de Thiard.—The danger to which I was exposed by them.—A parody of the lit de justice exhibited in the streets by the chimney-sweepers.—The parliament meets.—Weak measures to separate it.—General insurrection.—Violence of the attorney-general.—Deputation of the parliament.—Publication of its decisions.—Conduct of the nobility, with respect to M. d' Hervilly.—Weakness of M. de Thiard.*

IT was particularly recommended to M. de Thiard and me, in our instructions, to prevent the parliament from assembling in the palace, or elsewhere, after the registering, and a sufficient number of *lettres de cachet* were sent us to banish the members to their estates, in case we found that measure indispensably necessary. M. de Thiard in-  
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formed the president of this, and assured him, that he should regret extremely if the parliament, by infringing the king's orders, forced him upon such strong measures. The president promised him to do all that depended upon him to prevent the parliament from meeting. Accordingly, next day, about the same hour, several members having met at his house, and M. de Thiard being informed of it, and expressing his uneasiness, the president immediately begged of the members to withdraw.

But while the parliament gave this example of submission to the king's will, assemblies were held, night and morning, in the different *chambres de lecture* at Rennes, which might be looked upon as so many clubs. These were composed of citizens of every class, but chiefly of those intemperate spirits who were perpetually occupied in discussing political questions respecting the means of insurrection, and in corrupting or intimidating the soldiers, &c. These fire-brands of sedition required to be the more strictly attended to, as it was easy to perceive

perceive that their design was to force the members of the parliament to assemble, as the only means by which they could screen themselves from the reproach of cowardice, and from the insults of the populace. This happened, accordingly, a few days after, as I had foretold M. de Thiard, who unfortunately would not believe me; yet he was continually saying that, for his own part, he understood nothing of business; and he did not scruple to add, that it was M. l'Intendant who directed every thing. There was more truth in the first of these assertions than in the second; our characters were too opposite for my advice to suit him, and accordingly he seldom followed it. But his discourse, which was circulated in the town, increased the discontent against me and the danger to which I was exposed, as appeared by some very violent libels which were published against me. I was even threatened with assassination, which, indeed, might easily have been executed, as it was known that I went every evening to M. de Thiard's, and always returned home about the same

same hour, attended by one servant only. But happily France was not then so much familiarized with assassination as it has been since; and notwithstanding the cautions which I frequently received to avoid one particular corner of a street, and not to pass through another, I never was under the necessity of making use of the pistols which it was known I always carried in my pocket. But I was assured, indeed, that on one occasion a woman had prevented her son from firing a musket at me from her window.

The military officers were not received in any family in town; and there never passed a day in which some of the soldiers were not attacked or beaten. We were not much more respected ourselves. We seldom appeared in the streets without hearing very disagreeable comments passed upon us. To these M. de Thiard always returned a gracious smile, which the populace (not comprehending its refined delicacy) imputed to affectation, or took for a sign of fear. This custom of overlooking every attempt which was made against royal authority,  
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and the licence which was given to degrade and insult the persons employed to support it, inspired the leaders of the insurrection with the highest degree of insolence. A farce was acted in the squares and public streets, particularly under the windows of the commandant and the intendant, which was designed as a burlesque on the *lits de justice*, the last session of parliament, and some of the new laws. This piece was performed by shoe-blacks and chimney-sweepers, dressed in tattered black robes, square caps, and paper cravats, and seated on the little stools which those blackguards brought for the occasion, giving, as it was said, an exact representation of the scheme of putting the judge on a level with the judged. Printed papers, giving an account of all that passed at this royal sitting of shoe-blacks, were distributed with profusion among the populace. These papers contained also the speeches which the actors in this farce were supposed to have pronounced, but which the loud applause and mirth of the immense crowds which



which followed them prevented from being heard.

M. de Thiard, who dined with me that day, happened to arrive while this entertainment was going forward under my window. The idea appeared to him very amusing ; and he endeavoured to make me laugh at some of the sarcasms contained in a piece, where we were both made to act the lowest and most indecent parts. I could not help saying to him, with some degree of spleen, " that if this farce had been acted in Constantinople, and that I had read the account of it in the Gazette, I might perhaps have been as much inclined to laugh as he was ; but that it was impossible for me to find any amusement in seeing the king's authority so scandalously degraded." This was the case already, to such a degree, that the spirit of revolt infected every class. The parliament, which had till then given an example of submission to his majesty's orders, was loudly accused of having sold itself to the court, and was in a manner compelled, by circumstances, to infringe the interdiction against assembling.

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The guard, which was placed at the Palais, having orders to let nobody enter, the magistrates chose, as a place of meeting, the house of one of the presidents, situated opposite to the intendant's hotel. The assembly met at five o'clock in the morning. As soon as M. de Thiard was informed of this, he sent a detachment of the regiment of Rohan, and charged the officer who commanded to order the parliament, in the king's name, to separate immediately. But the doors were barricadoed. After knocking several times, without being answered, the officer contented himself with keeping the house blockaded, as he had no orders to force it open. As soon as it was known in the town that the parliament was assembled and besieged in the *Hotel de Guillé*, the people gathered in crouds to protect the magistrates. A great many gentlemen came with their swords, and unfortunately their discourse and their example encouraged the people to insult the troops in the grossest manner. The Procureur Général himself, who arrived at that moment, in his robes,

to join the assembly, had the imprudence to call the soldiers "vile satellites of despotism," and to threaten to deliver them up to the fury of the people. My advice had not been asked in any of these measures. I did not understand what had occasioned the tumult, nor the meaning of the clamours I heard while in my closet. At nine o'clock in the morning I received a note from M. de Thiard, in which he desired me to go to him. I sent him for answer, "that the mob was at my door, and that I could not go out, without exposing myself to be massacred; that I did not think I ought to run such a risk without an absolute necessity: it was therefore expedient we should communicate by writing." He immediately wrote to me a second note, in which he gave me to understand, that the king's service absolutely exacted of me to go to him as soon as possible, in order to consult and determine upon the measures which were to be taken; and that he had sent an escort to accompany me. This escort, composed of eight soldiers and an officer, was more fit to expose

expose me to observation, and consequently to insult, than to protect me against such a croud of assailants, whom the known benignity of M. de Thiard's orders had taught to face the soldiers without fear, however great their number. In yielding to the requisition of M. de Thiard, I thought it would be prudent to supply the want of proper protection by stratagem ; I therefore made the eight soldiers be placed without the great gate of my house, as if they had been sent there to defend the entry. I agreed with the officer that I should go out by a little door, and as soon as he saw me pass, he was to put himself in motion with the soldiers, and follow me at about the distance of forty paces. I also had the precaution not to appear in the black robe, or with long dressed hair, as I had hitherto always done. My stratagem succeeded perfectly at first. I passed within ten paces of the mob, without attracting any attention. They were entirely occupied by a detachment of dragoons, who came to support the siege or blockade of the *Hotel de Guillé*, and

who, instead of marching against the mob, whom they might have dispersed in a twinkling, formally drew themselves up according to the orders of M. de Thiard, and stood peaceable spectators in the walk which overlooks that part of the town. A few moments afterwards I met a dragoon, who, in galloping to join the detachment, chaced before him all the people that were in the street. Twenty-five dragoons, I am convinced, by a brisk charge, would have been sufficient to put all the inhabitants of the town to flight.

When I arrived at the top of the street which leads to the commandant's hotel, I saw, at the gate, a mob, consisting of about two thousand people, through which it was absolutely necessary for me to pass. I had not gone far into the street when I was discovered; and immediately there was a general shout of "*baro \* sur l'intendant*," accompanied with the most furious imprecations. I did not hesitate respecting the part

\* The cry of *baro* is used by the populace of Brittany and Normandy, when they intend to insult or attack any person.

I had

I had to take. To have retreated would have been as mean as unsafe ; and it appeared to me, that my only resource was to endeavour to overawe them by an intrepid countenance. I imperceptibly relaxed my pace, to give the officer, who followed me, time to come nearer me. I rejected his proposal, however, of placing me in the midst of the escort, directing him to continue to follow, but to keep nearer, and to order his men to walk firm and erect. I myself, in the mean time, continued my pace with as undaunted an air as I could assume, in spite of the cries of *baro*, which redoubled with violence as we approached. When we had got within ten paces of this mob, who were armed with sticks and stones, I put my hands into my pockets, to make them believe that I was provided with pistols. I advanced, fixing the boldest of them with a steady eye, and walked straight forward betwixt the croud and the wall of the hotel, as if the street had been quite clear. It became so for me. At this critical moment the shouts ceased at once, as if

an order had been issued for that purpose, the croud opened to the right and left as I advanced, and I entered M. de Thiard's hotel without any one having dared to throw a stone at me, or to insult me in any way.

I was hardly entered, when the cry of *huro* was renewed with fresh vigour, in spite of a body of fifty dragoons who stood at the gate, like so many equestrian statues. They were looked upon so much in that light, that amongst those who surrounded them there were people bold enough to pass under the horses, and cut the girths of two or three saddles.

I found M. de Thiard calmly conversing with some officers, not knowing any thing of what passed at his gate, nor comprehending the meaning of the shouts he heard. I said to him, with some heat, that he ought to know, better than me, the cause of the clamour; that it was the consequence of a general insurrection, which existed since six in the morning, and had been excited by a measure, in which, as he well knew, I had no part, since he had given orders without  
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saying a word to me. He excused himself, by saying that he did not think it necessary to disturb me, because he had never doubted but that the parliament would separate as soon as the troops arrived. He then consulted me upon what was to be done. "That is what you ought to find in your instructions," said I to him; "it is for you to consider whether you will follow them or not. When you have decided upon that point, I will give you my advice upon the means of executing them."

"But you know," said he, "what my instructions are."

"Yes, undoubtedly; but I am uncertain how far you intend to follow them."

"I wish the parliament to separate," said he.

"I am convinced you do," replied I; "but at present the question is not, what you wish the parliament to do, but what you will do yourself. You have the means in your power of doing what you please."



“ But what do *you* think ought to be done with respect to the parliament ?” resumed he.

“ I think there is nothing to be done at present,” answered I ; “ because it is more than probable that the object of their assembling is already fulfilled ; and if I was in your place, I would send orders immediately for the troops to withdraw.”

“ What, even before the parliament is separated ?”

“ Yes, without doubt ; unless you have ordered the troops to attend, merely by way of doing honour to the parliament, in a state of disobedience to the king’s orders.”

“ I ordered the troops on purpose to make the assembly separate,” answered he.

“ You ought, then,” said I, “ to have ordered them to force the door, when it was refused to be opened, and even to pull down the house, if necessary.”

“ Oh, I know very well that you are always for the most violent means,” said he.

“ No,” replied I, “ certainly I am not ; for I think, on the contrary, that violent measures

measures ought never to be had recourse to, till every moderate remedy has been tried in vain ; but I am for acting consistently ; and nothing can be more inconsistent and more hurtful than to exhibit powerful means, and then to act in a weak manner."

"It would be acting in a very weak manner," replied he, "to withdraw the troops at present ; and I cannot see any inconveniency in their remaining for some time longer."

"You will decide as you please."

We were engaged in this conversation, when a deputation from the parliament was announced. M. de Thiard went into his drawing-room, and I remained in his chamber, from which I heard the Procureur-Général complain to him, in a very outrageous and indecent stile, of an insult which he pretended to have received from the officer who commanded the dragoons. This officer, in conformity with the orders which he had received to admit nobody, had for some moments opposed the entrance of the deputies. The Procureur was deaf to all  
expostu-

expostulation. His colleagues in vain endeavoured to bring him to a more decent behaviour : he imperiously insisted on having justice done him against the officer, whom M. de Thiard had the complaisance to order under arrest.

The object of this deputation was to demand that the troops, which were stationed at the gate of the *Hotel de Cuillé*, should be recalled, to put an end to the scandal and the disorder which resulted from that measure. Before he gave them any answer, M. de Thiard thought proper to come and consult me, by which, without intending it, he did me a very ill office ; for it confirmed them in the notion that I was the instigator of the measure I complained of. I told M. de Thiard that I had already advised him to do what was now demanded of him, and that I had not altered my opinion. He then consented to the recall of the troops. He made it a condition, that the parliament should separate as soon as possible ; but the deputies not being authorized to stipulate for the assembly, could only promise that

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they

they would use their utmost efforts to prevail upon them to do so.

The assembly continued till five o'clock in the afternoon : at the same hour the protest, which the parliament had taken against the edicts lately registered, was published, and distributed all over the town with great profusion: We were at the same time informed, that there had been warm debates in the assembly, on this question, Whether there were not grounds for decreeing, that the king's commissioners should be taken into custody\* ? and it was carried in the negative, by a very small majority.

In consequence of this conduct, the parliament was immediately sent into exile. The *lettres de cachet* were delivered, the following evening, against all the members, except M. du Couedic, who, having seen the preceding day that to elude the execution of the king's orders, all that was necessary was to shut himself up in his chamber, and keep it fast locked, had recourse to this expedient, and with nearly equal

\* *Decretes de prise de corps.*

success,

success, with the parliament; for having shut himself up, and refused admittance to the officer who came with the *lettre de cachet*, and threatened to shoot any person who dared to force open his door, M. de Thiard thought it sufficient to place two sentinels in his antichamber, who passed two days there; which did not prevent M. du Couedic making his escape out of the window, getting clear of the town, and traversing the province, without having the king's order notified to him.

The ineffectual measure of exiling the parliament, so far from restoring tranquillity, only served to irritate the public more and more, and to augment the fermentation. The meeting of the *Chambres de Lecture* were permanent. The most violent measures were the constant object of their deliberations. It was decreed, in one of these assemblies, that all the gentlemen of Rennes should demand, in a body, satisfaction of M. d'Hervilly, colonel of the regiment of Rohan, for the insult he was supposed to have offered to the nobility in the  
person

person of one of its members, against whom he was accused of having raised his cane. The fact was, that during the blockade of the *Hotel de Cuillé*, M. d'Hervilly, who was there with the detachment of his regiment, was brutally assaulted by some gentlemen, who, after having torn off his epaulets, pushed him rudely against the wall; at that moment he suddenly raised his arm to defend his head; but he could not raise his arm, without also raising the cane which he held in his hand. It was this involuntary motion which was misinterpreted as an insulting gesture. M. d'Hervilly gave this explanation to a numerous deputation, who came to inform him of the intentions of the nobility. As his explanation did not satisfy them, he accepted, with gratitude, the honourable challenge that was proposed to him; but he told these gentlemen, that he must limit its execution to three duels a day, upon account of the time he was obliged to bestow on the king's service. The manner in which the first duel passed very happily terminated this quarrel. M. d'Hervilly  
having

having given his adversary his life three times, that gentleman rather chose to embrace him, than to continue the combat ; and the two others, who were to have fought M. d'Hervilly on the same day, declared themselves satisfied ; as did all the other gentlemen who were to have fought him afterwards.

This affair opened M. de Thiard's eyes to the danger of these assemblies which were held in town, and he consulted me upon the means of putting a stop to them. My opinion was, that at the point to which things were arrived, success could only be expected from the most vigorous measures ; and that with respect to these assemblies, I saw no other means than to publish, and rigorously execute, a decree, by which all assemblies whatever were interdicted, under pain of a penalty of 3000 livres, of confiscation, and the demolition of the house in which the assemblies should be held. He at first approved of my advice, and begged of me to draw up the decree, and make it be printed and published. This was done in  
the

the course of the day ; but the next morning he had changed his mind, upon hearing of M. d'Hervilly's reconciliation with the nobility, because he looked upon the measure as quite unnecessary ; and in spite of my earnest expostulations, he never could resolve upon publishing this decree, the execution of which might probably have stopped the progress of the revolt and the general disorder.



## CHAP. V.

*Progress of the insurrection.—Insolence of a Procureur du Roi.—Representations of the commission intermediaire \* of the states.—Violent conduct of the archbishop of Sens.—Decrees of the council.—Tumults.—Weakness of M. de Thiard.—Designs formed against me—My departure for Paris.—Its consequences.—M. de Thiard's recall.—Replaced by M. de Stainville.—Retreat of the archbishop of Sens—And of M. de Lamoignon.—Recall of Mr. Necker.—M. de Barentin appointed chancellor.—Mr. Necker prepares the convocation of the States General.—His motives.*

**T**HE establishment of the baillage at Rennes was become absolutely impossible, from the contempt into which royal

\* *Commission intermediaire* was composed of a certain number of the deputies of the three orders, who, during the intervals of the sittings of the States, were employed to execute some parts of the administration of that province.

authority

authority had fallen, from the protest of the parliament against the new laws, and from the inefficacy of all means of force in the hands of a commandant such as M. de Thiard. My correspondence with the ministers, and principally with the archbishop of Sens, turned upon the necessity of qualifying his measures, of abandoning his miserable *Cour Plenièrè*, and, above all, of suspending the execution of the new laws in Brittany, until such time as they should receive the approbation of the states, according to the privileges of that province, and the engagement which the king renewed at every sitting, never to make any attempt against them. The archbishop's answers were always laconic, and to a ridiculous height imperious; as for instance, "*The king will be obeyed.—The king knows how to make himself obeyed.—You will immediately receive such orders as the circumstances require.*" But a disregard of subordination and the spirit of revolt were so rapid, and these orders were dispatched so slowly, that we always received them about a fortnight

after the period in which they might have been of service.

The enthusiasm of insurrection had so heated every mind, and the disorder and weakness of government were so apparent, that those who, from motives of interest as well as duty, ought to have been its surest support, gloried in shewing themselves the most eager in attacking it. Thus, while the *commission intermediaire* addressed the most insolent expostulations to the king against the new edicts, and while the Procureur Syndic of the states travelled post over the municipalities of the province, to force them to take a protest against his majesty's orders, under pain of incurring the censure of the states and the parliament, the *Procureur du roi au presidial* threatened to prosecute us if we did not set at liberty a seditious fellow, who had been taken up before the *Hotel de Guille*. This fellow was at the head of a mob, exciting the people against the soldiers. A pistol and ammunition were found in his pockets. The Procureur insisted, that if the man was  
liable

liable to be tried, it belonged to him, and not to us, to prosecute him. M. de Thiard saw no impropriety in delivering up the fellow to the jurisdiction of the Procureur, in spite of my remonstrances against such a measure; and after a slight examination, this vagabond was set at liberty, as was to have been expected, amidst the acclamations of the populace, who conducted him home in triumph. It was even thought necessary to give him a few louis d'ors, to prevent his raising a process against us for damages, in which he would certainly have been successful.

The archbishop of Sens, confident in the resources of his own genius, and persuaded that his measures would be crowned with success, regarded the opposition in Brittany with contemptuous indifference; seeing that the greatest number of the baillages were established, and in activity, he thought that it would be in his power to restore that province to tranquillity when he pleased. He was, however, stung to the quick at the disrespectful style in which he and his measures

were mentioned in the representations addressed to the king by the *commission intermediaire* ; and he revenged himself by ordering twelve gentlemen of Brittany to be taken up, and conducted to the Bastille, several of whom had taken no part in the troubles which agitated that province. He sent us, at the same time, a decree of the council, with a dull and tedious preamble, the object of which was, to refute the principal objections that were raised against the new laws. We were ordered to publish and circulate it in all the principal towns of the province, without delay ; and this order was punctually executed. I told M. de Thiard, that I should cause the decree to be posted up next morning, but that we must expect to have it immediately torn down, unless there was a guard stationed by every placart ; and that an insurrection might very possibly be the consequence. “ We shall see,” replied he, with great composure ; and accordingly it was what we did see. The placarts, which were posted up at four o’clock in the morning, were all taken down

down by the populace, an immense croud of whom had assembled for the purpose of making a bonfire with them in the court of my hotel; but thanks to the firmness of my porter, and the solidity of my gate, the bonfire was not allowed to be kindled within the court, but only in the street before the hotel; and I sustained no other loss than having a few of my windows broken by the stones thrown by the mob. I immediately dispatched one of my clerks to M. de Thiard, to give him an account of what was passing; and about two hours after, when the mob was entirely dispersed, he sent me a few dragoons, and a guard of twenty men, whom I dismissed immediately, being convinced that my shewing any symptom of fear, or that I thought myself in danger, would be an infallible way of bringing the danger on. The people were accustomed to see a number of troops at the hotel of the commandant, but never at that of the intendant. The novelty of this alone would have attracted a croud; and when that had become great, a few se-

ditionous fellows might have excited them to insurrection.

The fermentation, occasioned by the exile of the magistrates, was considerably augmented by the confinement of the twelve gentlemen ; and the intelligence which was given me by the Sieur Tronjolly, *Procureur du Tribunal de Police*, prepared us to expect a very serious explosion. The project of retaliating upon us for those acts of despotism was publicly talked of ; and I have no doubt but that the trifling insurrection, occasioned by the posting up of the placarts, would have been more serious, had it been less sudden, and if more time had been given for the instigators to make preparations. They expected a new opportunity, which they hoped to improve to more advantage ; because the seditious gained strength daily by the accession of crowds of vagabonds, who having suffered under, or fled from, the lash of justice, flocked to Rennes from all quarters, some having been invited by the seditious, others attracted by the disorders that reigned at that place.

M. de Thiard, who had received information of all that was going forward, added a hundred men to the guard of his hotel, and obliged me to pass a night there. He earnestly intreated me to remain with him till the end of our mission. This would certainly have been the safest plan; but the idea of taking refuge, and concealing myself, was so repugnant to my character, that I could not consent to it. I returned to the Intendant's hotel next day, to which M. de Thiard sent a guard of twenty men. I wrote, the same day, to the archbishop of Sens, and to the chancellor, informing them, that in the present situation of affairs, the execution of the new laws was impracticable in Brittany; that our presence was ineffectual for the end proposed, and could serve no purpose but to lower the king's authority, as it was not in our power to punish the insults daily offered to us, neither could I secure myself from the danger which menaced me in particular; therefore I requested permission to return; adding, that



I would wait for it, unless the danger became very urgent.

Eight days had elapsed without my receiving any answer to these letters, when I was informed, by the *Procureur du roi* of the police, that my hotel would be attacked by a considerable mob, made up of the greatest vagabonds in Rennes; that they intended to enter by the garden wall, which was low enough for that purpose on the side next the street. Their design was to seize upon my person. The *Procureur* refused to mention the treatment which was intended me; he only advised me not to remain any longer at my hotel, as it was impossible to know how soon this attack would be made. On the same day, namely the seventh of July, I received the same advice from one Bouvard, who commanded the city guard at Rennes. I did not, however, follow it, but continued in the hotel; I only had the precaution to quit the chamber in which I usually slept, as it was on a level with the garden, and I went to a small apartment on the second floor, where they  
would

would not probably have thought of seeking me, and from which I could more easily have made my escape, had I been reduced to that extremity.

I was not long of knowing that the intelligence I had received was but too well founded. On the eighth of July, about two o'clock in the morning, the guard stationed in my garden perceived two men, who had clambered over the wall; but these fellows, observing that they were discovered, had time to make their escape before the guard could come up with them; and they were seen running along the street with eight or ten of their companions, who had undoubtedly come to reconnoitre the ground. This attempt determined me to leave Rennes next day, although I had not received permission, and although M. de Thiard offered to send me a more numerous guard. I answered him, that in order to re-establish and maintain the king's authority, it was not sufficient that we possessed the means of repelling such attacks as these, but that we ought also to have the power  
and

and the firmness to punish the authors with exemplary severity ; and that I could by no means consent to remain exposed to the danger of being attacked in my house, unless he would give positive and unlimited orders to the troops to repel force by force ; and likewise give me his word of honour that he would deliver up every person, seized in the act of assault, to be tried in the course of law, and executed if condemned. This proposal terrified him so much, that he thought it better for me to set off, and inform the ministers of what was passing. I accordingly left Rennes secretly on the 9th of July, at three o'clock in the morning, accompanied by eight dragoons, who escorted me half a league out of town ; and I arrived at Versailles on the 11th, at five in the afternoon. I alighted at the archbishop of Sens's hotel. He was surprised to see me, and received me coldly enough. " You were in a great hurry to come," said he, " Did not you receive my letter ?"

" No, my lord."

" If

“ If you had waited for it, you would then have known that it was the king’s intention that you should visit the principal towns of the province, in order to judge of the general disposition with respect to the new laws, and to give us an account of it. I confess,” continued he, “ that after the idea which M. de Montmorin gave me of your character, particularly of your firmness, I did not expect such a falling off on your part. None of your colleagues have done the same in any part of the kingdom.”

“ None of them,” I replied, “ have found things in the same state that I did. I shall only say, my lord, that I never was considered as faint-hearted; and you will find that I have not lost that reputation in Brittany; and I would have been there still, if my firmness alone could have answered any purpose. With respect to the journey which the king wished me to take through the principal towns of the province, that is quite unnecessary to the end of knowing the people’s dispositions. I am  
perfectly

perfectly well informed on that subject, by constant correspondence with my delegates ; and I can venture to assure you, that there will be no difficulty in establishing the new laws all over the province, after they are received at Rennes, but not before."

" Yes, but at Rennes, things go on very ill ; and the king is greatly dissatisfied."

" I am very sorry for it, but it is no fault of mine. I was very exact in declaring my opinion respecting what was likely to happen, and I mentioned what measures would have been most expedient during the existing circumstances. I am convinced that what I proposed would then have been effectual ; but now it would be too late."

" You surely had troops in abundance ?"

" A great deal too many. I never complained that we had not soldiers enough ; decisive orders were what we most stood in need of."

" What do you mean ? Did not the king give a *carte blanche* to M. de Thiard ?"

" He

“ He never told me so. The instructions which I saw were not to that effect.”

“ But what do you think ought to be done at present ?”

“ If it be the king’s intentions to have the new laws put in execution, M. de Thiard should receive positive instructions to that purpose, and be required, at the same time, to mention what means he thinks will be necessary to secure success, and furnish what he requires. But, above all, his instructions must be positive.”

To this the archbishop answered, “ It is not possible to foresee every circumstance. But, in short, there can be no inconvenience in allowing a few days to pass, till we see what effect your departure will produce. Go now to the chancellor, and return and see me as soon as you receive news from Brittany.”

M. de Lamoignon received me still worse than the archbishop of Sens. He severely reproached me for having sent my resignation, and for having left Rennes without having obtained the king’s permission. I  
completely

completely satisfied him with regard to the necessity of setting out, without waiting for leave ; and with regard to my sending my resignation, I reminded him of what had passed between us before I left Paris, upon the impossibility of my accepting of any commission that would oblige me to act against the parliament ; and it was easy for me to prove to him, that my conduct was the necessary consequence of the error I had been led into by his answer. I complained, in my turn, not of the reserve, but of the dissimulation with which I had been treated. " It appears to me," said I to him, " that without initiating me in the secret of the projected measure, I might at least have got a general hint that it concerned the magistracy and the administration of justice ; if I had, I should then have endeavoured to convince the archbishop of the danger of attempting such a measure in Brittany, before the approaching convocation of the states, and leaving it to their decision ; as in this way alone could it be reconciled to the privileges of that province, all of which the  
king

king had engaged to maintain: and this was likewise the only way to secure the success of the measure itself; whereas, the resistance with which it would be met in Brittany, would give the example of opposition, and encourage the other provinces to resist. The proper plans to have adopted," I added, "had been traced by M. de Maupeou, in a much more important and difficult enterprize. If they had adopted it, the result would have been the same in Brittany, by employing M. de Reverseau to transact business with the parliament, instead of sending him to the *Chambre des Comptes* at Nantes, where I could have more properly fulfilled the commission with which he was charged."

"All this," replied M. de Lamoignon, "is like mustard after dinner; and I am certain that the king will be very much astonished and displeased, when he knows that you are here."

"If his majesty," said I, "were acquainted with my character, he would be, on the contrary, surprised at my supporting, during



ring two long months, the contradictions and disgusts which I met with. I am good for nothing in such a conjuncture; and I would give in my resignation a thousand times, rather than be placed in the same circumstances again."

"I do not positively say," replied he, "that the king is determined upon your return to Brittany. We shall see. But you have brought yourself into a very disagreeable situation."

"I could not avoid it: but that which I have quitted was the worst of all situations."

"You are extremely obstinate."

"Perhaps I am, sir; and particularly when I think myself in the right, and have nothing to reproach myself with."

He then desired that I should immediately make out a circumstantial statement of the affairs in Brittany, which he would next day lay before the council; and so we separated, mutually dissatisfied with each other.

I drew up the statement, as he desired, and gave it him next morning. I found him

him rather softened, because M. de Montmorin, whom I had seen in the interval, had spoken to him in my favour, and had convinced him of the injustice of blaming me for the ill success of their measures, since the only means which could have insured it had not been under my direction. And surely it was no fault of mine that M. de Thiard only employed the troops in the defence of his hotel, and appeared to confine his whole care and attention to the single object of securing it from being taken by assault.

By the first messenger from Brittany intelligence was brought, "that on the very day which I left Rennes, a mob had assembled, and erected a gibbet before the hotel in which I had lodged; that upon this I had been hanged in effigy; and the figure representing me was afterwards burned in a large bonfire made for the purpose. This same figure was previously covered with inscriptions of the most insolent and seditious nature. This ceremony had continued a considerable time, during which many

execrations were uttered against the minister, as well as against M. de Thiard and myself, and no interruption was attempted by the troops or otherwise, nor was any measure adopted for arresting the actors or instigators, though they were well known.

The weakness of M. de Thiard was such, that the archbishop of Sens at last became sensible that there was an absolute necessity for sending a man more capable of commanding into Brittany. The Marechal de Stainville, who was then at Strasbourg, was sent for. It was hardly possible to make a better choice. He arrived at Rennes with the same orders and the same powers which had been given to M. de Thiard, whom he went to replace. He had only passed two days there, when subordination and tranquillity were perfectly re-established, without a shot being fired, or a blow struck; because it was known that the arms were charged, and that the troops had received orders, not only to repel force by force, but to fire upon the most inconsiderable mob

mob who refused to disperse. So true it is, that in order to restrain the people, it is absolutely necessary to appear not to fear them ; and that a number of troops do not overawe the multitude so much as the known firmness of him who commands them.

But while order was beginning to be restored in Brittany, the archbishop of Sens entirely destroyed the king's authority all over the kingdom ; sometimes from his neglecting to employ it when it was necessary ; and at other times, from his extravagant abuse of it. At length, when the finances, and public credit, and every resource were exhausted, the general disorder of the government forced him to abandon the ministry, and shamefully seek that asylum in a foreign country which the public indignation did not permit him to find in his own.

The public mind was now turned to Mr. Necker, as the only man who was capable, by his supposed talents and virtues, of repairing the bad effects of the vices and incapacity of

the archbishop of Sens. Thus the king was reduced and condemned by public opinion, by the imperious cry of the nation, to recall to his council the insolent minister whom he had, with so much satisfaction, sent away.

To abandon the measures of the archbishop of Sens, and to recall the parliaments, were the first acts of Mr. Necker's administration. The retreat of M. de Lamoignon soon succeeded that of the principal minister; and M. de Barentin, then first president *de la Cour des Aides* of Paris, was named chancellor. Mr. Necker proposed this gentleman, in the hopes of finding in him that blind and servile docility which the archbishop of Sens had found in M. de Lamoignon; but the conduct of M. de Barentin proved him to be a man of too much worth, and too much attached to the king, ever to be swayed by Mr. Necker, to neglect his duty to his majesty, or to forget what he owed to his own character.

The archbishop of Sens had unfortunately prevailed upon the king to come  
under

under the most solemn engagement to convene the States General in 1789; and as a completion of folly, he issued a decree of the council, authorizing, and even inviting, all who thought themselves capable of publishing, for the instruction of the government, their ideas on the best form of convoking the States General, the manner in which the assembly should be composed, and the objects they should take into consideration; as if there never had been an assembly of the States in France before, or rather, as if the motive of their convocation had been to establish an entire new form of government. And, in effect, this was the aim of the greatest part of those pamphlets with which France at this time overflowed.

It might have easily been foreseen, that an assembly of the States General, convened in that state of enthusiasm and convulsion, so far from producing any good effect, would necessarily expose the monarchy and the king to the most imminent danger. It is impossible to suppose that Mr. Necker did not foresee these consequences, without sup-

posing him uncommonly deficient in point of discernment : and if, foreseeing them, he resolved to meet them, he acted with the presumption of a madman, or the perfidy of a traitor. Had his intentions been upright, and had he possessed the one half of the talents which his flatterers imputed to him, the re-establishment of the finances would, as he said himself, have been a mere amusement to him, without the assistance of the States General. The enthusiastic confidence of the public, in his talents and probity, gave him the power of deferring the convocation as long as he pleased. But more ambitious of power, than sensible to the glory of ensuring the safety of the state, the only advantage which he endeavoured to derive from the circumstance was to fix his popularity on so firm a basis, as would confirm him in administration, independent of the intrigues of the court, and even in spite of the will of the king. His credulous vanity led him to believe that he should become the perpetual minister of the nation; by the great addition of character he would  
acquire

acquire in the display of his talents before the States General ; and this chimera made him hasten the convocation.

In this manner Mr. Necker became one of the first springs of that revolution, of which he was soon to be the shameful victim.



## CHAP. VI.

*Remarkable determination of the municipality of Rennes.—Representations upon the necessity of annulling it.—The other municipalities of the province imitate that of Rennes.—I give in my resignation.—Opening of the States of Brittany.—Insurrection against the nobility.—Separation of the States.—Opening of the States General.—Proposal of the club Breton, to Mr. Necker, rejected.—Debates upon the verification of rights.—Motives for dissolving the States General.—Plan proposed for this purpose approved of, but not followed.—Declaration of the 23d of June.*

THE States of Brittany were to be assembled at the end of the month of December 1788; and from the dissensions which still continued to agitate the province, it was easy to foresee that this assembly would be turbulent, unless the government displayed uncommon energy, and  
sent

sent another commandant than M. de Thiard. With respect to myself, I was determined against going, because it appeared to me prejudicial to the king's authority, and unbecoming my character, to return to Rennes, before public reparation was made for the insults I had received there; and also because Mr. Necker knew that on the first year of my intendant of Brittany, I had prompted the attorney-general to denounce to the parliament his book upon finance. I could not, therefore, expect to obtain from him that unlimited confidence, without which an intendant cannot do much good in his province, however high his abilities and upright his intentions may be.

In hopes that the government would come to a definite resolution relative to M. de Thiard and myself, I continued to fulfil the duties of my office with as much assiduity as if I had no idea of quitting it. At this time the municipality of Rennes came to a resolution, by which its deputies to the States of Brittany were interdicted  
from

from deliberating upon the demands of the king, or on any affair whatever, until the third order had obtained justice from the two other orders, upon the affair of the extraordinary *fouages* \*, which had been brought on the tapis at the preceding meeting of the States, and had occasioned the most violent debates.

But in proportion as the reclamation of the third order was just, the municipality of Rennes was inexcusable, in supporting it by means so irregular and so imperious ; for the determination which had been issued

\* The ordinary *fouages* were amongst the most ancient taxes imposed on the lands of peasants in Brittany, at a certain rate for each fire-place existing when this imposition was fixed ; but all additional fire-places, established posterior to the first imposition, were to be free from this tax. The extraordinary *fouages* were different, being originally a loan exacted from those very peasants by the States of the province, for the general expences of the province, on the express condition that the sum advanced was to be repaid, with the interest, at the end of the year. But this condition, instead of being adhered to, was quite neglected ; and the same loan was renewed and exacted, by the authority of the States, at every following sitting, and in time became a permanent tax, under the name of *fouages extraordinaires*, without any formal law.

out could have no other effect than that of irritating the nobility, and raising the people to insurrection against them. The day on which I received this determination from Rennes, I shewed Mr. Necker the plan of a decree of the council, by which the determination of the municipality should be annulled, and all the other municipalities of the kingdom should be interdicted from making such decrees, under pain of being dissolved. I insisted, in the most earnest manner, upon the necessity of sending this decree immediately to Rennes by a courier extraordinary, as a means to prevent the approaching opening of the States from becoming the commencement of a civil war. Mr. Necker answered, with the greatest coolness, that he could not take upon him to adopt a measure of such importance, without the approbation of the king and the ministers; and that he would speak of it at the committee which was to be held that evening. I returned to his house next day, and found that he had set out for Paris, without having given any orders in his office relative to the

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the proposed decree of the council. He was to return to Versailles to dinner, and I waited for him, in vain, till seven o'clock in the evening. I engaged M. de Thiard, who was of the Assembly of Notables, to watch the moments of Mr. Necker's return, and to join his intreaties to mine. I put into his hands a memorial upon this affair, and a letter for Mr. Necker, whom I went to Paris in search of. I found him setting out for Versailles, and I followed him back, but without being able to see him on my arrival at Versailles. Five days elapsed, and neither M. de Thiard nor me could obtain a definitive answer. I then wrote to him, that the decree of the council, which I had proposed, would now be ineffectual, as time had been given for the municipalities of the province to issue out determinations of the same kind with that of the municipality of Rennes, which I did not doubt of their having done; and therefore the proper measure now would be to make a new decree of the council, for annulling, not only the determination of the  
municipi-

municipality of Rennes, but the determinations of all the municipalities of Brittany that had the same tendency. Mr. Necker did not answer this letter ; and I learnt at his office, that my fears appeared to him groundless, and the measures I proposed much too violent.

Some time after, the report of my intention to resign being spread in the province, several municipalities sent deputies to Paris, who were commissioned to do every thing in their power to dissuade me from that step, and to use their influence with the ministers not to accept my resignation, if I should give it in. This deputation, which, in other circumstances, would have been extremely flattering to me, now rendered my resignation indispensable ; because it was known that the representations made to the king, on the injustice of the *fouages extraordinaires*, went originally from me, and I was considered as the chief promoter of the opposition made by the Tiers to that tax ; of course it might have supposed, when I set off for Brittany, that I intended to put myself

self at the head of the third order, in opposition to that of the nobility: and as such a conduct would not have been in any respect suitable for me, I did not choose to be suspected of it; therefore I gave in my resignation the sixth of December 1788, and M. du Faure de Rochefort was named to my place.

The States of Brittany were now to be opened. All the municipalities of the province had given their deputies a positive order to take no part in any deliberation, until the affair of the extraordinary *fouages* was terminated; and they were also commissioned to exact, as a preliminary condition to every arrangement, the total restitution, capital and interest, of the amount of all the contributions paid since the year 1641, under the title of *fouages extraordinaires*, which would have amounted to at least forty millions of livres, to be restored to contributors. In a court of equity, this could not have occasioned any hesitation. The council appeared to give a tacit approbation to these determinations and

mandates, by refusing to pronounce their repeal. The third order, therefore, naturally imagining that the court would support their pretensions, prepared to insist upon them with renewed firmness. The imprudent conduct of the nobility, in these critical circumstances, completed the general disgust. The Count of Boisselin, who was to preside, arrived at Rennes two days before the opening of the States. He assembled, at his house, all the nobility who came to Rennes upon the occasion, and made this irregular assembly adopt the resolution of paying no attention to the particular demands of the third order, until the general affairs of the province were terminated.

The discontent which this decision excited was a prelude to the tragical catastrophe which was to signalize the opening of the States. From the second sitting, the most violent animosity appeared betwixt the order of the nobility and the third order. Tumult and insurrection were the consequences. It was not to be expected that M. de Thiard, who could not repress  
sedition



sedition when he commanded an army of more than three thousand men, would be able to maintain order and obedience when he had only twenty or thirty *marechaussée* at his command. He could not even prevent the nobility from being besieged by the populace, for three days and two nights, in the hall of the States. At length, quite exhausted with hunger and fatigue, they came out on the third day, with their swords drawn, to force their way through the mob. Upon this occasion, a gentleman was killed by the firing of a pistol, and another was dangerously wounded.

It was known, two days after, that 400 young men had come armed, from Nantes, to the assistance of the citizens of Rennes. M. de Thiard sent the captain of his guard to meet them, in order to assure them that tranquillity was re-established; and as their presence could only breed tumult, he ordered them, in the king's name, to return to Nantes. But this did not prevent them from continuing their journey; and they arrived that very day at Rennes, where they

they were well received. In this state of affairs, it was impossible to continue the assembly: almost all the nobility had left Rennes, and M. de Thiard received orders to put an end to the meeting of the States.

I was then at Paris, far from these storms, which I had but too well foreseen; and I had many apprehensions, on account of the danger which threatened the kingdom at the approaching meeting of the States General, especially as they were to be constituted according to the new form, which Mr. Necker had persuaded the king to adopt. I was so much convinced that nothing but evil could be the result, that, to avoid the odium of having had any share in it, I absented myself from the electoral assembly of my section at Paris.

I had bestowed great pains in studying all that concerns the States General, in the most authentic monuments of our history, and had made a collection of notes and remarks upon that important point of our constitution. I gave an extract of these to

Mr. Necker ; but as he did not among them find what he wanted, namely, some authority or precedent for doubling the number of the deputies of the Tiers in the assembly of the States, he made no use of the materials with which I furnished him.

Some days after the opening of the States General, the desire I had to know the particulars of what was passing carried me to Versailles. I was accosted, in the street, by three deputies of the commons of Brittany. They expressed much regret that they had not been able to find me sooner, and requested a rendezvous, to confer with me upon very important matters. It was then about seven o'clock at night, and I proposed to accompany them to their lodgings. They agreed to this proposal so much the more willingly, as they expected, that evening, some of their colleagues, members of the club Breton, from which was formed, in a short time, the celebrated Jacobin club. I accordingly went with them to their inn, where our company was soon

increased by the addition of seven or eight persons, amongst whom were four deputies, whom I had known in Brittany.

After I had been introduced to those who were strangers to me, Champeaux Passane, deputy from St. Brieux, told me, that since their arrival, he and his colleagues had been extremely solicitous to see me, in order to take my opinion upon the conduct which they ought to maintain. "We are here," said he, "as if we had fallen from the clouds, in an unknown country, where an order of things exists, of which we had no idea. We are unacquainted with the court and the ministers, we know not what they desire of us, and we hope that you will direct us. You know our reliance upon you, and you may believe that we shall pay the same regard to your advice here that we had in Brittany." They all united in the same request, accompanied with the same assurances. I inquired what were their sentiments, and in what way they expected me to direct them. They assured me, that their intention was to do all

in their power to establish the king's authority in such a manner, that the nobility and parliament might never have the power of injuring it. I greatly approved of these sentiments ; but I observed, that as I was not in the ministry, I could not take upon me to direct them ; that it was to Mr. Necker to whom they ought to address themselves ; and that I would speak to him, if they authorized me. They answered, that they were not fond of going to Mr. Necker, because there was always a croud at his house ; and that if they were seen often with him, they would be suspected of being sold to the court : but that if I would be their interpreter with Mr. Necker, and transmit them his instructions, they would always strictly conform to them. I promised to wait upon Mr. Necker next day, and to bring to them his answer. They then consulted me upon the choice of their president ; and they knew so little of the court, that they had determined to choose the Duke of Orleans, from the idea that they could not make a choice more agreeable

able to the king. I convinced them of their error; and M. Bailly was named president.

I went next day to inform Mr. Necker of the disposition of these deputies; but not being able to see him, I desired M. Coster, his first secretary, to acquaint him with my business. When I went, next day, to receive Mr. Necker's answer, M. Coster told me that the minister declined all private communication with those deputies, as repugnant to the purity of his principles, since it might be considered as tampering with them, or a species of corruption. Some days after, Mr. Necker renewed an offer, which had been formerly made to me by Messrs. Barentin and de Montmorin, and which I had refused, of the place of first president of the *grand conseil* at Paris, as an indemnification for the loss of the intendance of Brittany. He added, that the king had commissioned him to renew this proposal, and was so desirous that I should accept of it, that he left it in my power to propose my own conditions with regard to

the appointments. I persisted in my refusal, upon account of the uncertainty of every place annexed to administration, till after the close of the States General. Irritated by this answer, Mr. Necker said to me, with great haughtiness and severity of manner, "You seem, sir, not to be very desirous to please the king, or to serve him."

"The king, sir," answered I, smiling, "does not think of me, and does not know in what I can be most useful to him."

"I have delivered to you, sir," rejoined Mr. Necker, with an air of authority, "what his majesty gave me in charge; you may perhaps receive, hereafter, his express orders to the same purpose."

"How, sir? Express orders to accept the place of first president of the *grand conseil*?"

"Why not?"

"Because I never heard before of a man's being commanded to accept of a situation that he did not like as an indemnification or reward; and I am convinced  
that

that the king is the last person on earth to impose such a hardship. Nevertheless, if I should receive such an order, I will find means to transmit to his majesty my motives for refusal."

I now perceived that he was a good deal disturbed, therefore took my leave, and I never saw the great Mr. Necker since.

The manner in which the States General were constituted, and the spirit of disorder which was manifest a few days after the opening, but too plainly shewed what was to be expected from such an assembly, if it was not firmly maintained within proper limits; or rather, if advantage was not taken of the first favourable opportunity to dissolve it. This last measure was the surest, and also the easiest, as it only exacted a moment's firmness. I proposed it, in a memorial which I transmitted to M. de Montmorin, at a time when it could have been executed, not only without exciting commotion, but to the great satisfaction of all the kingdom; and this was at the time when



there was a general outcry against the assembly, upon account of the length and indecency of the debates which had arisen, relative to the form of the verification of rights. This question had consumed the whole time of the sittings, for almost six weeks, and only served to irritate the Tiers Etat against the two other orders. These debates might have been prevented, had Mr. Necker better understood our constitutional laws, or had he been even directed by common sense. It certainly belonged to the king, who convened the assembly of the nation, to verify whether the letters of credit or mandates, of those who claimed the title of deputies, were or were not regular. But the measure, of leaving this important point to the decision of the assembly, having been already adopted, it would have been fortunate if the ministry had known, or rather had they been willing to take advantage of the conduct of the assembly, in consequence of its being left to themselves. The means of doing this I  
laid

laid open, in the memorial which I gave to M. Montmorin, the substance of which follows :

“ If it is wished to save the monarchy, and to prevent the total destruction of the government, not a moment must be lost. It is not yet too late, and the means are in our constitution ; for it will be there found, first, that the business and powers of the States General have always been limited to two points : the one, to unite all the instructions, demands, and grievances, of the particular bailliwicks, into one great address, and to present it to the king, who, with the assistance of his council, decides upon it as he thinks proper ; the other is by a general assembly of the whole, or by each order assembling separately, to vote or give their consent to such contributions as are necessary for the state.

“ Secondly, The king retains the power of dissolving the States General, whenever he thinks proper.

“ The king and present assembly find themselves in a position, of which there is

no

no precedent in our history ; for the instructions of all the bailliwicks are printed, so that the king may himself pick out the complaints and demands from the majority of the instructions, and, after mature examination in his council, decide upon them, without waiting till the great address is presented by the States General, who would have had full time to draw it up, if they had not employed themselves for a month in frivolous and obstinate debates upon mere matters of form, of which no one can see the end, and which delay the advantages that the nation expects to reap from the assembling of the States General.

“ The eagerness for realizing these expected advantages is more than a sufficient motive to determine the king to carry to the assembly, as soon as possible, first, An edict or declaration, by which his majesty shall pronounce his opinion upon all the demands which are contained in the majority of the instructions, and grant such of them as are proper.

“ Secondly,

“ Secondly, An exact statement of the national debt, with a detailed account of the usual expences of the government ; not comprising the household of the king, queen, and princes, which his majesty ought to announce he will provide for by the revenue of the domains of the crown, in which are included the produce of the posts, which are farmed. This measure, which at any time would be useful, will be particularly so at the present moment, as it will withdraw the king’s expences from the examination and censure of the States General, and leave them no pretext for not voting, immediately, contributions proportionable to the exigencies of the state.

“ Thirdly, A plan of finance, containing several modes of taxation, with an estimate of what each is likely to produce, to enable the assembly to appreciate and adopt those which they imagine will be least burdensome.

“ Fourthly,

“ Fourthly, An account of the pensions, salaries, and perquisites, marking the reduction of which they are susceptible.

“ After having read all these papers, the king may terminate the session by the following speech :

“ ‘ That which I have now done for the relief of my people, and for the improvement of the government of my kingdom, fulfils, as much as the circumstances will admit of, the wishes and demands which you are instructed to express to me. There remains, then, nothing more for you to do than to accomplish the last part of your instructions, by voting the taxes ; the necessity of which will be proved to you by the papers which have now been read.

“ ‘ This demand, which all your instructions authorize me to regard as already consented to by your constituents, ought to be the immediate and only object of your next meeting, which ought to be the last. I hope you will shew yourselves the worthy representatives of the French nation, by  
imitating,

imitating, upon this occasion, the example of promptitude, which all the assemblies of the States General, which have preceded you, have always shewn. And I charge the presidents of the orders to announce to me, to-morrow, the result of the deliberation which you are to enter into; and I will inform you, the day after, of the definitive measures which the welfare of the state makes it my duty to adopt.'

"The king, upon the following day, may dissolve the States General, whether they grant or refuse the taxes. In the first case, it is done of course. In the second case, the king must declare, that the fermentation and party spirit, which have never ceased to agitate the minds of the assembly, from the moment of their meeting, had prevented those benefits being derived which he and the nation had a right to expect; and that his majesty had resolved to dissolve this assembly, and either to convoke another, or to consult the assemblies of the bailliwicks upon the mode of taxation; and

and that until their inclinations upon this important subject are known, the existing taxes shall continue."

M. de Montmorin approved of this plan, and told me that he would speak of it to Mr. Necker, in the course of the day. To this I answered, that he might as well throw my memorial into the fire, as I was very certain that Mr. Necker would never adopt it. I expressed a desire, therefore, that he would rather transmit it to the king, or cause it to be read in council.

"This could answer no purpose," said he; "for as soon as I should begin to read your memorial in the council, Mr. Necker would stop me, and desire to have it communicated to himself before it was read; on which the king would order it to be delivered to him. But leave this to me, and I will speak to him in such a manner as will induce him to take your plan into consideration; and I shall take the same opportunity of prevailing upon him finally to fix your provisional appointments."

I was

I was convinced that he would neither succeed in the one nor the other, and I continued to urge him to transmit my memorial to the king ; but he persisted in asserting that this could have no effect, for the reasons he had already given.

I was surprized, on receiving a letter, next day, from Mr. Necker, informing me, that the king had granted me an appointment of 12,000 livres a year, to begin from the day I resigned, and to be continued until I was named to another situation. I at first imagined that this favour, so soon granted, and at the very moment in which my memorial was transmitted to Mr. Necker, was partly bestowed as a recompence ; and I concluded that the plan I had proposed was adopted. I immediately went to M. de Montmorin, to know whether it was so. He told me that Mr. Necker had read my memorial with attention ; that he was pleased with it, and approved of the principal ideas ; but that he thought this was not the precise moment for putting it in execution.

Eight



Eight days elapsed, without the court's having taken any decided part. It was at this time that the third order, having assembled in the tennis-court, declared themselves to be the *National Assembly*.

Upon this occasion, I wrote again to M. de Montmorin, shewing of what importance it was to take advantage of this new attempt against the constitution, and to employ it as a motive for dissolving the States. "Make yourself easy," said M. de Montmorin to me; "Mr. Necker does not sleep, as you will be convinced; and in a few days you will be satisfied. I cannot tell you more."

This mystery referred to the famous "seance" of the 23d of June, which was more fatal than useful in its consequences, by the insolent and perfidious absence of Mr. Necker.

## CHAP. VII.

MR. NECKER\*.

*Agioteur adroit, ministre sans moyen  
De rien il fit de l'or, et d'un empire rien.*

CT. DE V—.

**M**R. NECKER, from a common clerk to a banker at Geneva, at a salary of 600 livres a-year, having become, in a short time, a man of large fortune, a man of letters, and minister of the finance, is certainly no inconsiderable personage. Considered in the two first characters, he might only have interested bankers and literary men; but considered as a statesman, he is connected with events of too much importance for any of the particulars of his administra-

\* In order to give a just idea of this man, as famous for the evil he has done to France, as remarkable on account of the kind of idolatry, of which he was the object, I have thought proper to bring together, in one chapter, the principal facts which relate to him, separated from the historical details in which he has no concern.

tion to be foreign to the history of our disasters.

Mr. Theluffon, a banker at Paris, having requested his correspondent at Geneva to find out for him an intelligent clerk, to keep his cash-books, that correspondent, who was the banker with whom young Necker was then serving his apprenticeship, sent him to Paris, where Mr. Theluffon appointed him his deputy cashier, with a salary of 1200 livres a-year. He soon afterwards became principal cashier, and gained the entire confidence of Mr. Theluffon, who, in gratitude for some advantageous operations in exchange, which he had suggested, consented to take him in as a partner in his house.

Mr. Necker, taking advantage of the embarrassment of the royal treasury, at the beginning of the Abbé Terray's administration, made such good use of the capital of his patron, and of the company, that his share of those profits, manifestly usurious, was immense.

Such

Such was the origin of his fortune, which he augmented very much at the time of the meetings of those who had claims on the old East India Company, upon whom he had the address to impose by manœuvres more lucrative than honourable ; for which he has been since bitterly reproached by M. Panchot, who was perfectly acquainted with that transaction, and who was one of the ablest calculators in France.

Mr. Necker's foolish and enthusiastic admirers have never ceased extolling his rare talents for finance ; but how can we believe in them, when we consider the enormous blunders he committed in his loans, the exorbitant interest of annuities upon many lives, the excessive quantities of reimbursements at fixed periods and at too short intervals, and, above all, the false and absurd combination of the last loan of his first administration, two thirds of which remained, without value, amongst the refuse of the royal treasury, till M. Calonne, more skilful in the management of public credit,

revived, and made an advantageous use of it.

As for the pretended œconomy of Mr. Necker, M. Bourgade, in an excellent memorial sent to M. de Maurepas, has plainly demonstrated the empirical illusion of it, and made it appear, that the retrenchments, ordered by Mr. Necker with that revolting harshness of which he made an ostentatious display, only produced inconsiderable savings ; and, by destroying public confidence, had done more harm than good.

Mr. Necker owed his nomination to the place of director of the royal treasury to an intrigue which he set on foot against M. de Clugny, at that time comptroller-general.

Mr. Necker had framed a memorial, to prove that the one presented to the king by that minister, the import of which alarmed M. de Maurepas, was built on false foundations and incorrect calculations. He there affirmed, that with more ability it would be easy to remedy every thing, and to make  
up

up the acknowledged deficit; he pointed out the means, and reserved the development of them till he should be put into a situation to do it with effect. M. de Pezay, who enjoyed great credit with M. de Maurepas, and who (as it is said) sold the influence which he had with that minister at a very high price to the persons who applied to him, undertook to present this memorial, and to support it with his whole credit.

M. de Maurepas, who studied nothing but his own tranquillity, readily gave faith to the delusive promises of a man, who assured him that affairs were in a very good condition. On the death of M. Clugny, therefore, M. de Maurepas did not hesitate to intrust to Mr. Necker the direction of the royal treasury, and to appoint M. Taboureaux comptroller-general.

Mr. Necker's vanity was soon afterwards wounded by the inferiority to which the place of *directeur des finances* was reduced, by its being deprived of the honour of direct communication with the king. As

soon as he thought that he had made sufficient progress in the confidence of M. de Maurepas, and flattered himself with the hopes of his support, he found the means of exciting a financial controversy betwixt M. Taboureau and himself. The altercation became so violent, that a reconciliation betwixt them was no longer possible. M. de Maurepas was very much embarrassed what conduct he should adopt ; but on letting it appear that he was inclined in favour of Mr. Necker, M. Taboureau, who had accepted of his office with reluctance, did not hesitate to give in his resignation. The first operation of Mr. Necker, on his becoming director-general of the finance, by the resignation of M. Taboureau, was to suppress the places of intendants of the finance, filled by old and distinguished members of the king's council, who, under the direction of the comptroller-general, superintended some of the most important parts of that department. The suppression of those places could not be attended with any saving, because the appointments of those

those who held them consisted almost entirely in the interest of the price which they had paid for their offices, and which it was necessary to reimburse on their dismissal. It was presumed, therefore, that Mr. Necker was not so much actuated, on this occasion, by the real interest of the state, as by his own vanity, which he felt wounded, not only by the superiority of those persons of rank, but also by the superior talents of some of them.

The chief direction of the finances did not long satisfy his ambition. It was not sufficient for him to be precisely what his predecessors had been ; for whether it was from whim or from vanity, one of the most remarkable traits in his character was a continual affectation of being different, in the whole of his conduct and discourse, from the rest of mankind.

The admiration excited by his famous *Compte Rendu*, in spite of the errors and falsehoods it contained, had greatly increased his usual stock of vanity. His pretending to provide for the expenses of a war, with-



out imposing new taxes, although the attempt proved as ruinous to the country as it was absurd in itself, swelled his presumption to such a degree, that he thought the place of director-general of the finances beneath him, unless he was also admitted into the council of state. He thought his talents so indispensably necessary, and his credit so high, that the king would deviate from the established rules so far as to dispense, in his particular case, with the oath which all other ministers were obliged to take, before they could be admitted into the cabinet, and which he, as a protestant, could not take.

Having communicated these sentiments to M. de Maurepas, that minister told him that it would be better to make his application upon that subject to the king by a letter, which he would undertake to deliver to his majesty. This he did, in the intention, as has been generally imagined, to influence the mind of the king against so very extraordinary a request.

Mr. Necker was the more ardent in carrying this point, because he thought it absolutely

solutely necessary to remove the prejudice and the ridicule which had been raised against him by a multitude of pamphlets, and principally, by the letter addressed to d'Allembert, in the name of Carraccioli, which was in every body's hands.

No answer having been sent to Mr. Necker's letter for two days, he was so much irritated, that he carried his resignation to the queen, informing her majesty, that if a place in the cabinet was refused him, it was not in his power to do any further good. The queen, to his great astonishment, received his resignation without any mark of concern, only assuring him that she would deliver it to the king. On the following day, a new minister of finance was appointed.

The pride, hypocrisy, and violence of Mr. Necker, and his ridiculous rage against all the pamphlets of which he was the subject, were very plainly manifested, in a truly curious conversation which he had with the Comte de Vaudreuil, at the commencement of his first administration ; of which

which conversation the following is the substance, as it was communicated to me by the Comte de Vaudreuil himself.

“ Three months after the nomination of Mr. Necker to the place of director-general of the finance, M. de Vaudreuil went to speak to him on an affair which regarded one of his relations. He was received with politeness, and even with kindness. After having finished his business, as he was about to retire, Mr. Necker expressed a desire to converse with him a few minutes. He began with an eulogium on the king's virtues, and on his application to business. This was followed by another on the queen. When those topics were exhausted, he began to speak of himself, of his labours, his vigilance, of the constant obstacles which he met with in the painful career of his administration. He complained, with bitterness, of the attacks of envy, and of the libels which were scattered abroad against him.

“ The Count replied, ‘ that all persons in eminent situations, and of great reputation,  
were

were exposed to that misfortune ; but it was to be hoped that he would annihilate envy by the goodness of his measures.’

“ ‘ I agree with you,’ said Mr. Necker ; ‘ but a mind of such sensibility as mine can with difficulty support so much injustice ; for amongst many contemptible libels, there are some which inflict cruel wounds, and which make a great impression on the credulity of the public.’ ”

“ M. de Vaudreuil imagining that he alluded to a pamphlet just published by the Count de Lauraguais, answered, with a careless air, ‘ You have only to peruse the late publication of M. de Lauraguais, and you will immediately be convinced that there is nothing in it that need give you uneasiness. It is much too weak to hurt you.’ ”

“ M. de Vaudreuil had no sooner made this observation, than he perceived anger and resentment flash from the eyes of the philosopher.

“ ‘ What ! ’ cried he, ‘ has that villain written a pamphlet against me ? How dreadful it is to be restrained by my ministerial

sterial character? What pleasure should I feel in plunging a poniard into his heart!

“ M. de Vaudreuil, surprized and shocked at such violence, immediately arose, saying, as he withdrew, ‘ Believe me, sir, I only mentioned to you the name of M. de Lauraguais, because I thought you were speaking to me of his work. Assuredly it was not my intention to act the part of an informer against him.’

“ The next morning the Count d’Adhemar, one of M. de Vaudreuil’s friends, called upon him, and read a letter which he had just received from Madame Necker. The letter was full of inflated panegyrics on M. de Vaudreuil, expressing how much pleased Mr. Necker had been with his conversation, and how greatly flattered by the honour of his acquaintance, &c. It concluded, by desiring M. d’Adhemar to procure from his friend a copy of the work of M. de Lauraguais. This the former peremptorily refused, declaring, at the same time, how much he had been shocked at the indecent violence

violence of the man, and protesting that he would never again enter his house."

Notwithstanding the unexpected mortification which Mr. Necker sustained by his dismissal, he comforted himself in the firm persuasion that he should very soon be recalled. His friends and creatures, in the meanwhile, continued to assert everywhere that he was 'the only man who could re-establish the affairs of the nation. A work in four volumes, on the administration of the finance, was the fruit of his retirement, and what he conceived would be an infallible means of procuring his recall; which, however, did not take place till some years after; when being recalled to the administration, he was then placed in the cabinet with more influence than ever. The regulation of the form for convoking the States General was then in agitation, and that operation could not but be very embarrassing to a minister, so superficially acquainted, as Mr. Necker was, with the history and the public law of France. He employed several persons to compile extracts from  
history,

history, relative to that subject, and to consult those men who were thought the most enlightened in such matters. This research being completed, Mr. Necker, as is generally believed, was not a little disappointed by finding no precedent or authority for giving the *Tiers* a double representation in the approaching assembly of the States General; for which reason he prevailed on the king to adopt the measure of convening the notables, to take their opinion.

Being too little acquainted with men or with things to foresee the risk of the smallest innovation on the ancient forms of the government, at a time when men's minds were extremely agitated; or being too presumptuous to dread that risk, Mr. Necker had the imprudence to submit to the discussion of the notables the important question relative to the double representation of the *Tiers Etat*, which had been agitated in some pamphlets; and he had afterwards the rash inconsistency to influence his majesty to decide in favour of the double representation, in contradiction to the almost

unanimous opinion of those very notables, who had been called for the express purpose of giving their advice on that important point.

Experience has but too much proved the pernicious effect of this measure. Mr. Necker certainly was not aware of this; but eagerly grasping at popularity, he avowed and boasted that he was the author of this innovation, resting entirely on the gratitude of the *Tiers Etat*, and the promises made him by some of their deputations, to employ all their power to re-establish the king's authority, and to put it equally out of the reach of the attacks of the parliaments and of the nobility.

From that moment Mr. Necker shewed himself the zealous protector of the commons and of their pretensions. He even pushed his infatuation so far, as to suspend, by order of council, the judicial proceedings commenced in Brittany, on account of popular insurrections which had taken place there.

The



The concurrence of so many titles seemed to give him the assurance of great credit in the assembly of the States General, about to open at that time ; and certainly, with a small share of address, and less presumption, he would have acquired it in a considerable degree. The deputies of the commons of Brittany, who had the greatest share of influence in their Order, were entirely disposed to be directed by him, and addressed themselves to me to make the proposal to him, a fortnight or three weeks after the opening of the assembly ; but he formally refused it, for fear of being accused of having procured a double representation to the *Tiers Etat*, from the sole view of insuring their submission to himself. Being convinced that the decisions of an assembly, where the commons had the majority, could not but be favourable to his ambition, he thought it would be useless and perhaps injurious to his popularity to be suspected of influencing the deliberations of that assembly. He often declared, that the  
duty

duty of the king's minister, with respect to the States General, was confined to the assembling of them, and to the conducting them to the door of the hall in which they were to meet ; but that when the assembly was once opened, they ought no longer to be directed by any thing but the light of their own understandings, and their instructions."

At this period Mr. Necker seemed to hold the destiny of France in his own hands. Without having the title of prime minister, he enjoyed more influence and power than any prime minister had ever possessed. He alone dictated all the decisions of the council. His opinion was always adopted by the king. His colleagues, who had rather the appearance of being his first clerks, were very assiduous in paying court to him, and from morning to night his house was full of deputies.

The debates which arose amongst the Tiers Etat, at the opening of the States General, on account of the verification of their powers, and respecting their voting by

orders, had engrossed, for two months, the labours of the assembly; their whole business, during that time, being reduced to certain attacks on the royal authority; some of more, some of less importance: to put an end to which, Mr. Necker proposed the famous declaration of the 23d of June, by which the king granted the principal demands made by the instructions of the deputies, announced the most favourable dispositions with regard to those which required more ample consideration, established periodical assemblies of the States General, provincial assemblies, &c.

The measure was of so much importance, that before the king adopted it, he thought it right to submit it to the discussion of an extraordinary council, to which the prince his brothers, and the most enlightened counsellors of state, were summoned. The plan of the declaration, framed by Mr. Necker, was unanimously adopted, the following corrections excepted: First, The deliberation of the 17th of June, in the tennis-court, by which the

M

Tiers

Tiers Etat had declared itself a national assembly, was not formally annulled in the plan formed by Mr. Necker.

The opinion which prevailed at the council was formally to declare the nullity of that deliberation, and of all which followed it, and to re-establish the title of States General.

Secondly, Mr. Necker, in his plan, had taken no notice of the distinction of the three classes of Deputies Etat, but had merely authorized the assembly to vote individually for that time only; that is to say, during that session.

The opinion which prevailed in the council was to keep up that distinction, and to authorize the assembly to vote individually only in the case where the object of deliberation equally regarded the citizens of all classes.

Thirdly, The plan of Mr. Necker contained an article, which declared that the citizens of every class should be admitted equally into all offices, without any other distinction than that of abilities and virtues.

The opinion which prevailed at the council was to suppress that article, upon the ground, that before the ordinance, published in the administration of the Marechal de Segur, the citizens of all classes were admitted into military employments, as they have always been into the magistracy and ecclesiastical professions; that it was sufficient, therefore, to revoke that ordinance by a new one, proceeding from the king, which revocation would have the whole effect of the article proposed by Mr. Necker, and did not require the solemnity of a law published in the States General.

Lastly, By an article of Mr. Necker's plan, the assembly was empowered to regulate the organization of all future assemblies of the States General.

The opinion which prevailed in council was to suppress that article, because the right of regulating the form and constitution of the States General belongs essentially, and had always belonged, to the king alone. And if this article was agreed to, the assembly would unquestionably decide,

cide, that all future assemblies should be composed precisely like the present; namely, that two thirds of the assembly should be taken from the Order of the Tiers: for besides the six hundred deputies, there were, among the three hundred of which the clergy consisted, at least two hundred *curés*, who, by birth, belonged to the Tiers Etat; of course the king's ancient and unquestionable prerogative, in this particular, would be entirely annihilated, and the whole power of the States General would be transferred to the Tiers Etat\*.

The king approved of these corrections, and announced that he would go the next day to the assembly, with all his ministers, to publish that declaration. The mortification which Mr. Necker's vanity made him feel, because his opinion had not been entirely adopted by the council, inspired him with the insolent and fatal resolution not to accompany the king to the assembly, upon that occasion. This circumstance was soon spread abroad, and all the mem-

\* *Vide* Appendix, No. I.

bers of the assembly, as well as the public, concluded that the projected measure was contrary to the opinion of Mr. Necker. That conjecture, at a moment when the public confidence, and the whole popularity of the administration, were solely concentrated in him, was sufficient to occasion the rejection of the most advantageous proposals, without discussion. Such, in short, was the declaration of the 23d of June, which, two months before, would have been received with transport, as the most signal benefit that could be conferred by the king, and in perfect conformity with the wishes of the nation.

The arrogance which the assembly displayed, in rejecting this declaration, but too clearly proved that the royal authority was nearly annihilated. It was far otherwise with respect to Mr. Necker's credit. It had never been so great. The assembly and the people approved, in the highest degree, his having dared to give the first example of opposition to the royal will. On their return from that sitting,  
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the deputies went in crouds to his hotel; but he affected a slight indisposition, as an excuse for not receiving the whole, and admitted only a very small number of them. It was feared that his dismissal would be the consequence of the pretended patriotism which he had the courage to display on this occasion. No more was wanting to spread the alarm in Versailles. In the evening he waited on the king. As soon as it was known, an immense mob rushed into the court of the palace, and soon after, nothing was heard but shouts of *Vive M. Necker!* No resignation! and not one *Vive le Roi!* No one doubted, that in coming from the king, Mr. Necker would have had the prudent modesty to withdraw himself from the unbridled transports of the populace, by returning by the inner passage which led from the palace to the comptroller-general's hotel. But he was much too fond of popular applause to wish to lose any of it, especially at a moment when he considered it as an infallible preservative against the effects of the royal displeasure. He



therefore came out of the palace through the public court. Instantly the multitude rushed to the place where he was to pass, with redoubled shouts, and made him promise not to give in his resignation ; which having done, those who were nearest raised him in their arms to shew him to the people, and in that manner he was carried in triumph to his hotel.

From that moment disturbances, and the spirit of insurrection, made a progress so rapid and so alarming, that the king resolved to dismiss a set of ministers, who had but too well proved their incapacity to prevent the impending evils, or to remedy them when they arrived. Mr. Necker was the first dismissed. He departed secretly, on the 11th of July, from Versailles, according to the king's orders, and set off for Switzerland. As soon as the news of his departure arrived at Paris, it excited the most violent commotions. His bust, and that of the Duke of Orleans, were paraded through the streets, in the midst of the most seditious clamours against the king, and  
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against the new ministers. The assembly, either from weakness, or from a desire to preserve, to the revolution, such a minister as Mr. Necker, instead of supporting the government with all its authority, to secure the re-establishment of order, meanly followed the impulse of the populace, and obliged the king to recall the disgraced ministers, or, to speak more correctly, to recall Mr. Necker; for according to the prevailing opinion, the only circumstance which created any degree of interest in the fate of the other ministers was their having had the honour to share his disgrace.

If, at a time when the public opinion was so enthusiastically in his favour, Mr. Necker had refused to return, and had continued, for the rest of his life, at his retreat in Switzerland, he might perhaps have been considered, by posterity, among the greatest ministers that ever France produced. As for my own part, I should have been well pleased that mankind had continued in this mistake, because the circumstance which had removed it has cost so very dear to my country;

country; for, unhappily for France and for the glory of Mr. Necker, he chose to return to the administration, and entirely removed the delusion under which the nation laboured respecting his abilities.

It is difficult to calculate what would have been the effects of so wise a determination. It is not impossible that there might have resulted from it very serious attempts even upon the person of the king; and if that consideration determined Mr. Necker to return into administration, it is certainly impossible not to give him credit for so generous a motive. But to have rendered his zeal useful to the king and to the state, at that period, he had but one line of conduct to adopt, which was, to have immediately presented himself to the assembly, and after having thanked them for the concern with which they had honoured him, to have candidly announced to them that he was the author of the declaration of the 23d of June, as it had been read in the assembly, except some expressions which

which had been altered, which by no means altered the sense of it; that he solemnly persisted in the opinion, that the form of government established by that law, according to the wishes expressed in the majority of the instructions, was the only one proper for France; therefore his conscience, his honour, and his zeal made it his duty not to return into administration till the assembly had declared their adherence to the declaration of the 23d of June. The general confidence and vast credit which Mr. Necker enjoyed at that moment enabled him to give the people whatever impression he pleased, and to have made it impossible for the assembly to have rejected his propositions. It was in his power, at this period, to have had many abuses corrected, the monarchy wisely limited and preserved; and by so important a service, he would have secured to himself as long a ministerial career as his ambition could have desired. But the transports of joy which burst from the people, at his return, made him entirely lose his senses. His speech, or rather the

few words which he was able to articulate, though flat and insignificant, were very much applauded at the time. But not satisfied with the incense he had received at Versailles, he set out to enjoy it in greater abundance at Paris. His arrival was announced to the municipality, and all the people hastened thither, to enjoy the happiness of seeing him again. He first repaired to the council of the *commune*, which was assembled in order to receive him, and there pronounced a pathetic speech, in which he requested, as the greatest proof which the citizens of Paris could give him of their attachment, that his return might be the epocha of the re-establishment of order and of peace, the forgetting of all resentments, of a general amnesty in favour of those who had been prosecuted or arrested on account of the late disturbances, and especially of M. de Buzenval, his countryman and friend. All these demands were voted, and agreed to unanimously by the council, and by the immense croud which filled the tribunes and the galleries. He  
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could, without the smallest difficulty, have obtained any thing he had thought proper to have asked. He afterwards went to one of the halls in the *Hotel de Ville*; and, for the purpose of shewing himself to the people in the most interesting point of view, he appeared in one of the balconies which looked into the *Place de Grave*, between his wife and daughter, who, to render the exhibition quite sentimental and affecting, and also to draw part of the applause to themselves, kissed his hands, and embraced him repeatedly.

He returned to Versailles, charmed with his success, and more than ever convinced of his own vast power and influence over the minds of the people. But that illusion did not long continue. Scarce had he arrived at the barrier of Paris, when the sections being assembled, and having heard what had passed at the *Hotel de Ville*, considered the declaration which had taken place, on the proposal of Mr. Necker, as a manifest attack on the rights of the king and  
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of the national assembly, who alone were competent to grant an amnesty; consequently that deliberation was declared null by the sections; and four hours after the departure of the courier, dispatched to set M. de Buzenval at liberty, other couriers were sent, to order him to be again arrested. This fatal reverse, which Mr. Necker could only impute to the absurdity of his own conduct, was like a clap of thunder to him. His haughtiness and his hopes abandoned him. His importance and his popularity declined daily with the greatest rapidity. Thus the day which he considered as the most glorious of his life, was, in fact, the last day of his glory. Far from preserving any credit with the assembly, he saw it diminishing daily. Those who had before been his secret enemies, now declared themselves openly, attacking him with bitterness, and overwhelming him with odium. They at length reduced him to the humiliating necessity of escaping, in the night-time, from the danger of a popular

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lar insurrection, which they excited solely for the purpose of alarming and driving him out of France.

Thus miserably ended the ministerial career of that extraordinary man, whose faults have cost France so dear. I say his faults, and not his crimes; for though I cannot reproach myself with having felt, for a moment, the smallest prejudice in favour of Mr. Necker, I knew him well enough to be firmly persuaded that he never intended the ill he has done, or that he had the least notion that his measures would produce it. I only blame his vanity and his extravagant presumption. He so completely, in his conscience, believed himself to be the ablest minister that ever existed, that he would have been mortified to have only been compared with Sully and Colbert. He did not hesitate to believe, that he combined, in a superior degree, all the great qualities of the greatest ministers, without any of their faults. Independent of his superiority over them in what regarded his administration, he thought that  
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the confidence which the public had in his virtues and talents would enable him to embark in greater undertakings than any of his predecessors.

When recalled to administration, that same presumption, that same confidence in his own superior genius, which had always distinguished him, made him believe that he alone was capable of effecting the restoration of France, by giving it a new constitution. He was thoroughly persuaded, that the best constitution for France would be that which should secure to a minister, like himself, the greatest share of influence in the government, and the firmest stability in his situation. He thought that the surest means of attaining that end, was to conciliate the favour and attachment of the majority of the States General. If they had been constituted according to the ancient forms, the majority would have rested in the united orders of the clergy and the nobility. Mr. Necker having no means of attaching to himself the members of these two orders, who, as they were not connected

connected with him, and looked for no services at his hands, owed him no gratitude. The measure he chose to adopt, therefore, was, that of loudly proclaiming himself the protector of the Tiers Etat. He was resolved to risk every thing, in order to give them the preponderance, not doubting but that as that Order would owe to him all its power, it would use it in the manner most conformable to the views of so popular a minister.

Such seems to me the most rational judgment which those who knew Mr. Necker could form of his conduct. To him, certainly, the disasters of the revolution are chiefly imputable; but they must be set down to the account of his vanity and want of ability, not to that of his wickedness. I am as far from believing, with the admirers of Mr. Necker, that he was the ablest of ministers and the most virtuous of men, as from admitting, with his detractors, that he wished to destroy the monarchy, the nobility, and the clergy, because he was himself a republican of low extraction, and a protestant. Posterity,

which will appreciate him without prejudice, will see in him a man, selfish, ambitious, and vain; foolishly intoxicated with the merit which he believed himself to possess, and jealous of that of others; desirous of excess of honour and of power; virtuous in words and through ostentation more than in reality. In a word, he was a presumptuous empiric in politics and morals; but he was conscientiously so, for he was always the first dupe of his own empiricism.

He was attached to France, if not by affection, at least from always having considered it as the theatre of glory to which he thought himself summoned.

Fifty years sooner, when France was in tranquillity, his administration would have proved no more hurtful to that nation, than the magnetism of Mesmer to men of firmness and sound understanding.

As a minister, he had no other merit than that of having acquired a perfect knowledge of what is called the *mechanism* of finances; but he was perfectly ignorant of

the laws of the kingdom, and of the principles of administration. As a literary man, although his works are laboriously composed, and written with affected emphasis, yet the useful truths which some of them contain will secure him a place among the distinguished writers of the age.

## C H A P. VIII.

*The danger of permitting the national assembly to issue decrees.—Motives and means of maintaining the practice of voting by Order.—The dismissal and recall of Mr. Necker.—Endeavours of the deputies from Brittany to get me appointed Garde de Sceaux.—Opposition on my part.—Memorial, on the reformation of which the magistracy was susceptible.—New organization of the administrative bodies.—Advantages which might have been drawn from it.—Character of M. de Montmorin.—Retreat of M. de Fleurieu, in consequence of the perfidious conduct of one of his clerks.—The king, through M. de Montmorin, offers me the place of minister of the marine.—Reasons of my refusing. The appointment of M. Thevenard to that office.*

**T**HE first deliberation, which the assembly thought proper to denominate Decree, was, by this title alone, not only a violation

violation of the ancient constitution, which never, in any case, authorised the States General to issue decrees, but it was also the most serious possible attempt against royal authority, which, from that moment, ceased to exist. This point was thoroughly canvassed in the memorial above-mentioned, which M. de Montmorin gave to Mr. Necker, in which I insisted, that there was no law of the kingdom, authorising the States General to issue decrees; and that, in fact, no assembly of the States had ever assumed that prerogative; that if this form should be introduced through a new constitution, approved of by the king and the nation, good and well: but no such thing existed at present, and the conduct of the States General should be regulated according to the existing laws; therefore all the acts hitherto made by the States, and entitled decrees, ought to be annulled. For if the assembly could of themselves pronounce decrees, independent of any interposition of the king, what security had the nation that they would not issue a decree

for taking possession of the finance? in which case the king would become a mere cypher, and the monarchy would be annihilated \*."

The best method of avoiding this danger was to insist upon the States voting by their different Orders; and the present emergency presented the king with a just and indisputable motive of terminating the disputes which had arisen upon this occasion, and of deciding the question against individual votes

The nobility, and the higher order of the clergy of Brittany, had refused to name their deputies to the States General, upon the pretence that the form of their convocation was contrary to the customs and privileges of the province. The ten deputies, that the higher clergy had named, were replaced by ten curates, who belonged to the Order *du Tiers*, at least by birth; but

\* In fact, the national assembly afterwards perceived the force of this; for by the constitution which they established, no act of the assembly could have the force of a law or decree, until it received the king's approbation.

the twenty-one deputies, which the noblesse of Brittany ought to have sent, were not replaced by the gentlemen of the other provinces ; therefore the Order of the nobility had, in the States General, twenty-one members less, and the Order of the Tiers had about ten members more, than they ought. It necessarily resulted, that in every question decided by individual votes, the Order of the clergy and the nobility would constantly find themselves in a minority of twenty-one at least ; and that consequently all the power of this assembly, composed of three Orders, would reside in one exclusively. This simple calculation, inserted in the preamble of a law in which the king would have prescribed to the assembly to vote by Orders, would have been sufficient to have shewn the wisdom and justice of the measure, and have gained the king all the suffrages. But Mr. Necker was not yet convinced, that voting individually was more dangerous than useful. And with regard to the title which the assembly gave to its acts, he placed no im-



portance upon it. "It is only," said he to M. de Montmorin, "a mere dispute upon words; and it is not with words that we must occupy ourselves. The parliaments give decisions (*arrets*), the assembly issues decrees, but the king always preserves the right of annulling the decisions and decrees which are contrary to the laws."

All this fine reasoning was completely false, and only proved the want of foresight in the man; for it is but too certain, that words have been one great instrument of the revolution. It was by words, which the people did not comprehend, that their character, morals, and customs were changed, and that they were at length brought to consider the greatest crimes as acts of patriotism and virtue. On the other hand, could Mr. Necker, with sincerity, compare the decisions of courts of justice to the acts of sovereign legislation, proceeding from a national assembly, whose ambitious presumption so evidently tended to deprive the king of all authority? The decision  
made

made in the tennis-court, by which the Order *du Tiers* had constituted itself, by its own authority, "*Assemblée Nationale*," was broken by an article in the king's declaration of the 23d of June. But this article had the fate of the whole declaration, which proved abortive, as the assembly refused to obey it, the ministry, under the influence of Mr. Necker, being afraid to enforce its execution. The king becoming, at length, sensible of this, came to the resolution of dismissing Mr. Necker, and also those ministers who were either deceived or misled by him. But the insurrection at Paris, which happened three days after, obliged the new ministers to give in their resignation, and quit the kingdom ; the sole means of escaping the fury of the people, who demanded, with loud cries, the recall of Mr. Necker, and those of his colleagues who partook in his disgrace ; to all which requisitions, it is universally known, the king was forced to consent.

As soon as the day of Mr. Necker's arrival at Versailles was known, the deputation

tion from the commons of Brittany waited on him, and delivered him a memorial, the object of which was to demand the place of *Garde des Sceaux* for me. I was no sooner informed of this step, than I wrote to Mr. Necker, to assure him I had no part in it, and requesting him not to think of me for any place whatever, because I knew of none in which I could be of any use in the present circumstances. He did not answer this letter; and the archbishop of Bordeaux was named *Garde des Sceaux*.

It was but too easy to foresee, that every place to which I might be supposed, from my former situations, to have pretensions, would soon become dangerous, and almost impossible for a man of honour and integrity to fulfil with utility. I therefore gave myself up entirely to the duties of my office of *maitre des requêtes*, to the privy council, &c.

At the period when the assembly prepared to regulate the courts of justice, I published a memorial, indicating some reforms of which those courts were susceptible.

ible. The constant and laborious study which I had bestowed on this subject, enabled me to propose a plan, in which all that seemed good in the ancient institutions should be united with whatever was wise and useful in the various systems now proposed. Several members of the council and the parliament, and many of the deputies, greatly approved of my memorial ; and I have reason to believe that it would have proved of some utility, if the party which governed the assembly had not been itself governed by a rage as extravagant as it proved fatal. Thus the parliaments, betrayed or ill supported by some of their own members, who happened to be deputies to the States General, and vilified by the numerous band of advocates and procureurs, which formed the majority of the Tiers, became among the first victims of the desolating genius of that assembly, whose convocation they themselves had promoted.

The organization of the department of the municipalities, and particularly of the districts

districts of Paris, introduced a new power, upon the scene of the revolution, which the factious took advantage of, to render its course more rapid ; but which might have been made subservient to stop it entirely, or, at least, to direct it better. This might have been accomplished, if the nobility, instead of rendering themselves of no consequence, by acting singly, and by manifesting the greatest, and, unfortunately, the most fruitless antipathy against the pretended constitutional decrees, had seemed to yield to circumstances, and had reserved their final opinion of the merit of the new laws to future experience. They would soon have had the majority in the assemblies of the districts, provided they had attended them assiduously, and shewn this spirit of moderation and prudence. It would have been an easy matter for them to have taken a decisive lead in the deliberations at first, because, in the beginning, the *bourgeoise*, and the inferior class, furnished but very indifferent orators, and still fewer tolerable writers ; and such a number of both would not have  
been

been formed among the Tiers, if those who were distinguished by the appellation of aristocrates had not abstained from attending the assemblies.

I had an opportunity of convincing myself of this truth, in the assemblies of the district "*des minimes*," where, however, I only went, for the first time, six months after its opening. M. de Corberon, counsellor of the parliament of Paris, that day filled the president's chair. He never opened his mouth without receiving applause; and every motion was passed or rejected, according as he thought proper to support or oppose it. The other orators, most in credit, were counsellors belonging to the *chatelet*, advocates, procureurs, notaries, &c. all men tolerably well educated, and of good sense. The inferior and uneducated people, at this time, did not even presume to speak.

The day after I had been enrolled in the list of active citizens, I was voted, by an almost unanimous voice, commissary of the district, although I was only known by an  
opinion

opinion I had pronounced in the assembly of that district on the preceding day, and which had been adopted. I found the committee composed of the wisest persons of the assembly. No aristocrats, indeed, but many as much royalists as myself; all, excepting one Dutrouillet, a mad republican, and since member of the convention. His extravagant declamations against the executive power were overlooked, on account of his ardent zeal for the poor, and for the general interest of the people, of whom he always spoke in that bombastic language which is so often mistaken, by the multitude, for eloquence. There were some other seditious spirits in the section, who, from time to time, attempted revolutionary motions, in the meetings of the district; but the least objection was sufficient to make them be rejected, and often turned into ridicule.

The good disposition of our assemblies was daily fortified and improved by advantageous acquisitions. The first president *de la Cour des Aides*, and the president *de la Cour de Monnoyes*, who  
came

came after me, attended with unremitting assiduity; and for some time the section *des Minimes* was distinguished from all the others by the wisdom of its decisions, the energy of its petitions to the national assembly, and by its prudent addresses to the other sections.

All the new theories of administration were discussed, in these assemblies, with as much force as clearness, though always in that patriotic style which it was then absolutely necessary to assume, in order to be listened to; and by repeating, as often as possible, the words "*liberty, equality, rights of men,*" &c.

If, in the other parts of the kingdom, or even in the other sections of Paris, all reasonable people had followed our example, it is more than probable that they would, like us, have succeeded in preventing or unmasking the criminal manœuvres of the factious, and gradually acquired such a degree of credit, in the majority of the districts, as would have influenced the national assembly,



assembly, and produced the happiest effects in the course of the revolution.

As the district of the *Minimes* gave the greatest umbrage to the Jacobins, they determined to use every means to disturb its meetings, and to terrify respectable citizens from attending it; for which purpose numerous detachments of their boisterous adherents derided, insulted, and threatened all whose opinions were dictated by good sense and moderation. The district supported these insults for some time, but the most moderate withdrew themselves, when they found that their perseverance answered no end. This manoeuvre of the Jacobins, which was irresistible against a single district, would not have succeeded, if they had been obliged to employ it against all the districts of Paris; as they would have reciprocally have assisted each other, and baffled the designs of that faction.

It may not be improper here to relate an anecdote, which may serve to give an idea of the freedom of opinions in this district.

When

When they proceeded to the election of the mayor of Paris, M. de Corberon said, loud enough to be heard by about fifty people, who were on the same side of the hall, "As I firmly believe that the mayor, whom we are going to choose, will be hanged at last, I shall give my vote for the man who I think best deserves a gibbet, and that is the Duke of Orleans." This speech, which soon spread over the assembly, so far from exciting displeasure, was rather applauded than blamed.

I may mention, as another instance to the same purpose, that I had, for more than nine months, attended the assemblies of the district, and the meetings of the committees, without a national cockade, and no notice was taken of it but by my friends, who were apprehensive that this imprudence would expose me to insults ; but I had such a horror for that badge of crime and revolt, that to avoid wearing it, I had never, since the king's arrival, gone to the castle of the Thuilleries, or to any public place, where I could not be admitted without a

cockade. I wore it, for the first time, on the day in which the king sent for me, to propose to me the place of minister of the marine.

My forced retreat from the district of the *Minimes* obliged me to return back to that state of inactivity, to which my resignation of the intendance of Brittany had reduced me, and I became one of that too numerous class which remained passive spectators of this revolution, of which murder and pillage were at once the object and the means; a revolution, of which the whole kingdom was to be the prey; that has neither spared its authors nor their accomplices; for already many of them have been sacrificed, and, being joined to more illustrious names, enlarge the immense list of its victims. From this time I confined myself to my own family, and to the society of a few friends, only occupying myself in arranging my moderate fortune in such a manner as would enable me to leave the kingdom, when I could no longer remain in it with safety. I continued, however, to dine

once a week with the Count of Montmorin, with whom I had been intimately connected ever since our residence in Brittany, where he was commander in chief when I was named Intendant of the province. He had remained in Brittany till the death of M. de Vergennes minister of foreign affairs, whose department was given to him.

Of all the men who acted an important part in the revolution, M. de Montmorin is perhaps the person who is least known, and who has been judged with the greatest severity. The general opinion, with respect to him, is such, that one cannot, without being suspected of democracy, or, at least, of being a constitutionalist, acknowledge having had any intimacy with him; and it requires some degree of boldness to defend his character. My connection with him has been often stated against me as a crime; and I should not be surprized if that opinion, equally unjust and absurd, was still adhered to by some of those first enthusiasts of emigration, who have the candour to imagine that there are no true royalists in  
O 2 France,

France, excepting those who emigrated at the same period with themselves. For my own part, I thought then, and do still think, that it was my duty, as a lover of my king and country, not to abandon them at a period when both were in such imminent danger, and while there remained any hopes of my being of service to them. Yet I do not take upon me to blame those who have acted differently; I only assert, very firmly, that their attachment to the king was not purer than mine, notwithstanding my intimacy with M. de Montmorin, who was neither constitutionalist nor democrat, but a real royalist; and I may add, with truth, that I know no person who was a more faithful servant to the king. I must at the same time acknowledge, that the extreme weakness of his character prevented him from being useful to his majesty, in circumstances that required much energy; and it is probable that his fears may often have suggested measures more calculated to increase than to remedy the evils with which the king was threatened. This moral  
weakness

weakness had its source in a sickly constitution, and can no more be imputed to him as a crime, than his being of a low stature and slender frame of body.

Among the number of faults of which M. de Montmorin has been accused, it would be easy, if not entirely to justify, at least to palliate the greater part, by demonstrating that they never proceeded from perfidy or self-interest. I one day had a quarrel with him, at his own house, upon the subject of a report made by M. de Freteau in the first assembly, in which he had asserted, that at the diplomatique committee, held the day before at M. de Montmorin's, that minister had said, "that the Prince de Condé and the Cardinal de Rohan, who were out of the kingdom, were intriguing and manœuvring, in order to raise up foreign powers against France." M. de Montmorin, in answer to the bitter reproaches I made on this subject, said, with considerable heat, "How could you, who know me, believe, for a moment, that I was capable of expressing myself in those

terms? What I said," continued M. de Montmorin, "was nearly the reverse; for in speaking of the necessity there was of repressing the various excesses which were committed, and which had forced the Prince of Condé to leave the kingdom, I endeavoured to show, that it was of importance to employ every possible means of engaging that prince to return, because he was so highly respected, that the idea of his being forced to emigrate must have a very bad effect on the minds of all the foreign powers, and would excite against France all those who were allied to the house of Bourbon. With regard to the Cardinal de Rohan," added he, "we should also endeavour to conciliate him, if we wished for a favourable issue to our negotiations with the princes of the empire, relative to their possessions in Alsace, because he might greatly influence their determinations."

To all this, I replied to M. de Montmorin, "That since such was the case, it was incumbent on him, without loss of time, to give a formal denial to what M. de Freteau  
had

had said in his report, and address it in a letter to the assembly."

"I was thinking of that," answered M. de Montmorin. "But in case M. de Freteau has concerted the report with the other members of the committee, they are very capable, in support of their manœuvre, to oppose their testimony to my assertion, which, though true, will be reputed false."

"Write, at least," said I, "to M. de Freteau, to make him retract, or rectify his report; and warn him, that if he does not, you will make your letter be printed in all the journals."

He approved of this plan, as the most moderate, and wrote, the same day, to M. de Freteau, who, in his answer, acknowledged that his report was erroneous; that it proceeded entirely from inattention; that instead of saying, "M. de Montmorin had asserted that the Prince de Condé and Cardinal de Rohan were manœuvring," &c. he (M. de Freteau) ought and intended to have said, "that from M. de Montmorin's dis-



course, he was led to conjecture that the Prince of Condé," &c.

He promised to make this error be corrected upon the register, conformable to the opinion of the committee, and to inform his principal colleagues in the assembly. M. de Montmorin had the condescendance not to exact more. I in vain intreated that he would make this answer and his letter public. He thought it sufficient to keep them both in his possession, to be made use of only in case his conduct should afterwards be publicly censured, on account of M. Freteau's report to the assembly. What is perhaps the most remarkable circumstance in this affair is, that M. de Montmorin was quite astonished at the energy which he thought he had displayed on the occasion.

This trait is sufficient to shew the timidity of this minister. I say timidity, not cowardice; he was by no means a coward. No man feared death less; and it will appear, in the course of these Memoirs, with what tranquillity he foresaw and met his fate.

fate. Nay, he even braved it, but in a manner agreeable to his character ; namely, by continual correspondences, and other concealed, though dangerous measures, for the king's service, which he directed and paid for out of the funds of his department. Among these expences was the money he thought it necessary to advance to certain popular orators, to counterbalance, in some degree, the furious declamations which were daily made against the king in the Jacobin club, and in various other clubs, assemblies, and groups.

When I represented to him the risk that he ran, by this conduct, and the great danger there was, that some of the numerous agents which he employed would betray him, and expose him to be insulted, or perhaps assassinated by the populace, he answered, with great coolness, " I am well aware of the truth of what you represent ; but no personal danger shall ever prevent me, while I remain in the king's service, from doing every thing that I think may be of utility to his majesty." This way of thinking

thinking was very generous, no doubt ; but the means he used were in my opinion infinitely less useful for the attaining the object he had in view, than many vigorous measures which he might have suggested to his majesty, if he had possessed more energy of character, and less of that passive courage, which can only do honour to the close of life, because it enables us to die with firmness.

M. de Montmorin has been blamed for living in a kind of intimacy with certain deputies of the *côté gauche*. This, however, I have always considered as one of the strongest and most painful marks of his attachment to his majesty. I knew that he abhorred their opinions, and despised their characters, and that he lived in that manner with them, in the sole view of bringing them over to his way of thinking. These measures of weakness and duplicity were employed by the king's consent, who trusted too much to them. Perhaps they might retard some pernicious decrees, and occasion others to be rejected ; but the most certain

certain and apparent effect was to make M. de Montmorin be looked upon as a zealous partizan of the revolution, and of its guilty authors. And thus, at the expence of his character, he obtained uncertain advantages, by far too inconsiderable to be purchased at so dear a rate.

It is not then astonishing, that the conduct of this minister has appeared criminal, or at least suspicious, to every person who was ignorant to what degree he was devoted to the king, and that not being able to serve him by firmness, because he had none, he endeavoured to assist him by every method which his weakness permitted him to employ.

But had M. de Montmorin been called to the ministry in less turbulent times, or had he been associated with ministers of greater vigor and of more upright intentions, the inconveniencies arising from his timidity would have been fully compensated, in council, by his acquired knowledge, his fidelity, and the precise justness of his understanding.

M. de

M. de Fleurieu, who succeeded M. de la Luzerne in the department of the marine, may also be quoted in the number of ministers who had the same kind of weakness; with this difference, however, that his was never prejudicial to any body but to himself, because he had the prudence to confine himself entirely to the details of the marine and the colonies; and the king, who greatly esteemed his virtues, never employed him (as he did M. de Montmorin) in any affair foreign to his department. M. de Fleurieu, whom no one, certainly, respects more than I do, joined to that timid modesty, which often accompanies the greatest merit, the candour and confiding simplicity which often renders honest men the dupes of designing knaves; and this he experienced in a manner the most revolting. One of his clerks, called Bonjour, who was attached and sold to the Jacobin club, being irritated because the ancient Intendants of the marine, who had been suppressed by a decree, still preserved the same authority in the office, and the same superiority

superiority over the clerks, by the direction of M. de Fleurieu, had the baseness to denounce that minister to the assembly as an enemy to the constitution who was acting in opposition to the decrees of the assembly. As the foundation of this denunciation, he made use of an order for the payment of the salaries of the office, signed by M. de Fleurieu, but written by himself for the purpose. In inserting the suppressed intendants in this order, instead of distinguishing them simply by their names, he had the perfidy to add their ancient titles, which had been prohibited by a decree of the assembly, although the minister was permitted to employ them as he pleased in his office. This order, thus arranged, being presented by Bonjour to be signed, with several others, M. de Fleurieu, according to custom, only looked at the title and the sum total, and signed it without taking time to read over the names. His conduct had nothing in it reprehensible; and the infamous denunciation of Bonjour must have recoiled upon himself, rendered him infamous,

famous, and he would have lost his place, as being guilty of an abuse of confidence, and of a voluntary and premeditated infringement of the decrees of the assembly; but M. de Fleurieu, satisfied with having justified himself, and apprehensive of a quarrel with the Jacobins, if he turned off Bonjour, left him in the office, and gave in his own resignation, to avoid the disgust of doing business with such a wretch.

The deputies from Brittany had reiterated their endeavours for my being named *Garde des Sceaux*, upon the retreat of the archbishop of Bordeaux; and they now made a new attempt to have me made minister of the marine, in the room of M. de Fleurieu. This was proposed to me by the king, through M. de Montmorin; but I begged of him to intreat his majesty to dispense with my accepting it. The motives which I urged for refusing were, not only my absolute ignorance of affairs relating to the department of the marine, but also the manner in which the council was then composed, and the great difficulty  
which

which the king must have found to have composed it of unexceptionable members, at a period when, even in the formation of his cabinet council, he was under a necessity to pay some regard to the sentiments of the *côté gauche* of the assembly and the Jacobins; for their opinion passed for the opinion of the nation. M. de Montmorin, after having in vain combated the motives of my refusal, asked me what I thought of M. Thevenard, *commandant de la marine* at L'Orient, where I had frequently seen him during a month which I passed there in 1784. I said, that the place he occupied, and of which he did the business very well, was perhaps the only situation he was fit for; and that it would be doing him the worst service in the world, to take it from him, but above all, to call him to the ministry, because I was convinced that he would only expose himself, and could not remain in place two months.

The great difficulty of finding a proper person, determined the king, at this particular



ular time, to name M. Thevenard minister of the marine.

How much reason had I to felicitate myself, six weeks after, for having avoided, by my refusal, the critical and unforeseen situation into which the ministers were thrown, by the king's departure for Varennes! During the time of his absence, and even after his return, from the end of June till the middle of September, while he was confined to the Thuilleries like a prisoner, and deprived of all his regal functions, the ministers continued in the exercise of their offices, as if his majesty had been at liberty and in power. They no doubt imagined that they would be more useful to the king and kingdom, by acting so, than by giving in their resignations; but assuredly their conduct, on this occasion, would not have been mine. No consideration would have induced me to consent to become one of the chief agents, one of the first accomplices of a monstrous government, in which the king, unworthily outraged,

outraged, and imprisoned in his own palace, had not, nor could have, any part. The ministers were perhaps too much terrified by the menaces which were made, in case of their refusal, of immediately establishing a republic, and were not aware of the more certain danger of preparing and familiarizing the public mind with the possibility of such an event, by exhibiting to the people's view, during three months, the revolting and absurd spectacle of a monarchy without a king. It is very probable that this fatal example gave rise to the idea, which was four years afterwards adopted, of replacing the constitutional king of 1791, by a directory of five persons.

## CHAP. IX.

*Retreat of M. Thevenard.—The king again proposes that I should enter into the administration.—I accept.—Sentiments of the king and queen upon the constitution.—A letter from me to the assembly.—Conference with M. Thevenard.—Opinion of the different parties, with respect to my nomination.—Ill disposition of the assembly manifested in the very first sitting.—Prudent conduct of the king.—The ministers agree among themselves to have no communication with the committees, and always to correspond directly with the assembly.—Proclamation addressed to the emigrant nobility.—Letters from the ministers of war and marine to the officers, to engage them to return to the kingdom.*

**T**HE new constitution was now agreed to. The king had no other alternative but to accept it as it was presented to him,

him, without alteration or restriction, or to abdicate the crown; by accepting, he regained not the essential prerogatives, but only the vain title of a king, deprived of power, but with the enjoyment of his civil list, and the cessation of the humiliating rigours and exterior signs of his captivity. The pretended constitutional assembly being near the period affixed by itself for its termination, was to be replaced by the pretended legislative body, invested with the powers which the constitutional act had appointed; but with so little precision, that its ill ascertained limits might be infringed without any obstacle, for there existed no means of resisting any attack upon it, except the vague obligation imposed upon the king, of employing all the power which was confided in him to maintain the constitution. But to employ this power against the attacks of the legislative body would have required great energy in the king, and the support of a council composed of ministers who possessed

sufficient diligence, fidelity, and intrepidity, to brave all dangers in order to preserve the monarchy; but unfortunately there were few men, I will not say in the council only, but in all France, who possessed those qualities, with which I still believe it would have been possible to restrain the violences of the assembly, and the want of which brought all to ruin. It was in these critical circumstances that M. Thevenard, who had but too well justified my opinion of him, gave in his resignation.

On the 25th of October the king again offered to me, through M. de Montmorin, the office of minister of the marine; and in terms so pressing, that I was at first as much surprised as embarrassed. However, as the events which followed my first refusal fortified the motives upon which it was founded, I persisted in intreating M. de Montmorin (as the greatest proof of friendship he could give me) that he would do every thing in his power to influence the king to throw his eyes on some other person. The  
king

king wrote to me two days after, and enforced what M. de Montmorin had said. His majesty ended his letter with the following sentence: "In a word, I am confident that your services would be useful to me and to the state. I know your attachment to me, and expect, in the present emergency, that you will give me this proof of your zeal and obedience."

In my answer to this letter, I persevered in my former opinion, founding my repeated refusal on the unjust but very universal prejudice that existed against all the ancient intendants of provinces, which would render me suspected of being an enemy to the new order of things, with whatever prudence and moderation I might act.

The king, after having read my letter, said to M. de Montmorin, who had delivered it: "But ask M. Bertrand, then, how I am to find ministers, and what is to become of me, if persons such as he, who profess themselves attached to me, refuse their services, and abandon me?" I was greatly moved and

overcome by words so touching ; and after the assurances given me by M. de Montmorin, that great changes were going to take place in the council, and that I should be satisfied with the new ministers, I no longer hesitated to answer that I was at the king's command ; but I requested that his majesty would not make my nomination public, until he granted me an audience. The next day, which was the 1st of October, M. de Lessart came to me from the king, and conducted me into his apartment.

As it was the first time that I had ever had the honour of speaking to his majesty, on finding myself *tête-à-tête* with him, I was so overwhelmed with timidity, that if it had been my part to speak first, I should not have been able to pronounce a sentence. But I acquired courage, on observing that the king was more embarrassed than myself. He stammered out a few words without connection, but at last recovered himself, on seeing me more at my ease,

ease, and our conversation soon became interesting.

After some general observations upon the present difficult and perplexed state of public affairs, the king said to me, "Well, have you any farther objections?"

"No, sire," answered I. "The desire of obeying and pleasing your majesty, is the only sentiment I feel. But that I may know whether it will be in my power to serve you with utility, I hope your majesty will have the condescension to inform me of your sentiments respecting the new constitution, and the conduct you expect from your ministers regarding it."

"That is but just," said the king. "This, then, is what I think. I am far from regarding this constitution as a *chef d'œuvre*. I believe there are great faults in it; and that if I had been allowed to state my observations upon it, some advantageous alterations might have been adopted. But of this there is no question at present; I have sworn to maintain it, such as it is, and I am determined, as I ought, to be strictly



faithful to my oath ; for it is my opinion, that an exact execution of the constitution is the best means of making it thoroughly known to the nation, who will then perceive the changes proper to be made. I have not, and I cannot, have another plan than this. I certainly shall not recede from it ; and I wish my ministers to conform to the same."

To this I answered, " Your plan appears to me extremely wise, sire. I feel myself capable of fulfilling it, and I take the engagement to do so. I have not so sufficiently examined the constitution, either in general, or in its particular branches, to have a decided and fixed opinion respecting its practicability, nor shall I form one, until experience has more enlightened the nation and myself. My present resolution is, never to deviate from what it prescribes. But may I be permitted to ask, if the queen's way of thinking on this subject, is conformable to that of your majesty ?" added I.

" Yes,

"Yes, perfectly. She will tell you so herself."

A moment after, I went to the queen's apartment, who, after assuring me with great goodness, that she was as sensible as the king of the obligations I had laid them under by accepting of a part in the administration in circumstances so difficult, she added these words: "The king has informed you of his intentions relative to the constitution. Don't you think, that the only plan he has to follow, is to adhere to his oath?"

"Yes, certainly, madam," answered I.

"Well, be assured," rejoined she, "that nothing shall make us alter our resolution. *Allons* ; be of good courage, M. Bertrand. With a little patience, firmness, and consistency of conduct, I hope you will find that all is not yet lost."

I was named minister the 1st of October, and next day took my oath to the king. According to custom, I announced my nomination by a letter to the assembly. Many remarks were made, but without any  
apparent

apparent displeasure, on my not having imitated my predecessors, by flattering the assembly, and praising the constitution. I simply expressed in my letter, "that having sworn to the king to be faithful to the constitution, I engaged myself to the assembly to adhere literally to my oath, and promote the execution of the constitution by every means within my sphere."

M. Thevenard was much more impatient to be out of the ministry than I was to enter it. When he heard of my first refusal to replace him, imagining that it proceeded from my inexperience in maritime affairs, he sent me word that he would give me every necessary instruction; and when he afterwards heard of my accepting, he was persuaded that it was his offer alone that had overcome all my objections and difficulties. Two days after my instalment, he demanded a rendezvous, that he might fulfil his promise. Although I did not expect any very useful information from him, yet out of regard to the integrity of the man, and goodness of his intentions, I appointed to

meet him on that same day. He came loaded with a port-folio, which I supposed was to be given to me, as the quintessence of all that was necessary to be known respecting the administration of marine and the colonies. However, he only took a small packet out of it, upon which there were five or six seals, and which, ever since the administration of the Marechal de Castries, had been transmitted, in succession, to the ministers of marine. It was inscribed, "*to be opened only in time of war.*" M. Thevenard told me, when he put it into my hands, that he believed it contained the secret of a method contrived by M. de Bellegarde, for setting the enemy's ships on fire. He then seated himself at my bureau, and spoke to me as follows :

" Well, you have obtained a very advantageous, agreeable appointment, and I leave it to you in an excellent condition. You will find no great difficulty in the exercise of it ; only the occasional teazings of the assembly ; a war of pens. You will extricate yourself better than I could. I was in bad health.

health. But at present the worst is over. This new assembly will be more tractable than the other. Your office is well composed. You have excellent first clerks, diligent, worthy men ; very zealous, that is the main point. I must make you acquainted with them. You have, in the first place, M. de Malezieu, who has the department of officers, the nomination to employments, &c. But this must be written down, for it is of great importance. Accordingly he gave himself the trouble of writing every minute article relative to M. de Malezieu's department, exactly as it is printed in the Royal Almanack. With equal precision he wrote down all that belonged to the departments of the other first clerks, each of whom was successively called in as the article which concerned him was writing ; and they were all presented to me with such exaggerated encomiums as greatly distressed their modesty. When he came to the article of the clerk Bonjour, I could not help expressing surprise, on hearing him praise that knave, after his infamous conduct

duct to M. de Fleurieu, the late minister of the marine.

"I own," answered he, "that I never would take any part in that quarrel. I always avoided speaking of it. Bonjour is protected by the Jacobins—by the assembly. What could I do? His dispute with Fleurieu was no concern of mine. The man is assiduous, very intelligent. He does his business, and that was all I wanted."

"But how," said I, "could you have the least confidence in a person who was first capable of drawing up a paper himself, and after he had got M. de Fleurieu to sign it, with a view to ruin him, lay the whole before the national assembly?"

"I have already told you," answered he, "that I never investigated that affair."

"But were you not afraid," said I, "that he would play you a similar trick?"

"Oh, no," answered he; "I took care of that. Besides, I had a manner of living with my clerks, which attached them so much, that they never could think of injuring

juring me. I always treated them like friends; and in the morning, when they came to do business with me, my method was, to order a bottle of good wine; and so we began by taking a comfortable breakfast together. You cannot imagine what a good effect this had. I advise you to do the same."

"I believe it is a very good method," said I, "but it will not do for me, because I never breakfast. I must make up for this, by sometimes inviting them to dinner."

"You will do well to do so," answered he; "and I advise you to reflect seriously on the manner you are to behave to Bon-jour. He is a dangerous man, be assured of that."

"We shall see," answered I.

"These, sir," resumed he, "are the hints which I thought it essential to give to you. With regard to less important circumstances respecting your department, your first clerks can inform you of these much better than I can; they are all very intelligent."

I ex-

I expressed my gratitude for the service he had rendered me, and we terminated our conversation, which lasted two hours, including the introduction of the clerks.

The public was then very attentive to the choice of the ministers, because, from their character, their known principles, and their former conduct, an idea, more or less just, might be formed of the king's sentiments and intentions. My nomination occasioned great speculation, as, since the opening of the first assembly, I had acted no part, nor figured in any party. Those who knew my intimacy with M. de Montmorin, and who knew that I had regularly assisted at the assemblies of the section, believed that I was a constitutionalist; and those who were informed of the zeal with which I had supported the interest of the people in Brittany, and the steps which the deputies of that province had taken to have me nominated to the ministry, believed me to be a Jacobin. Others, from my birth, and the offices I had held, suspected me of aristocracy; while the most moderate aristocrats



ocrats condemned me for taking any part in the administration, after a constitution which they disapproved of was accepted. The principal journalists for some time contributed to keep up this diversity of opinion. The Gazette of Paris, which was written by Durosoi, and the paper entitled *l'Ami du Roi*, by the Abbé Royou, were full of sarcasms upon my nomination. Brissot published my eulogium in the *Patriote François*; but Condorcet, more circumspect, did not mention me in the *Chronique de Paris*.

The legislative assembly manifested, in the first sitting, the greatest desire to contest the honours and prerogatives which the constitution and the preceding assembly had left to the king. On the second day it was decreed, that when the king should come to the opening of the assembly, the president should place himself on a level, and on an equal chair with his majesty. This excited a general indignation against the assembly; and although the constitution had fixed nothing with respect to the king and the president's

dent's chairs, as the former assembly had never contested giving the king the most honourable place, this insolent pretension of the new deputies was highly disapproved of. It was still thought proper that the king should be honoured, and it was unanimously wished that he should, upon this occasion, firmly assert the dignity which belonged to him. The affair being discussed in council, the king found a means, in the constitution, of eluding the intended humiliation, by not going to the assembly. In reality, the constitution did not oblige him to open the session in person, or to go to the assembly upon any occasion. The king preferred this to more vigorous measures, which were ever repugnant to his character.

The assembly being informed of the king's determination, was now sensible, that in endeavouring to degrade him, it had injured itself in the public opinion. These considerations determined them to repeal the decree, and the king then con-

sent to go in person to the opening of the assembly \*.

The unquiet and turbulent disposition which this assembly displayed sufficiently warned the ministers to keep themselves upon their guard, to study the constitution, and to adhere to it strictly; that unfortunately being the only defence they had against the various attacks they were likely to meet with. Several of the ministers having been injured by their correspondence with and attendance upon the committees of the first assembly, came to a determination, and with the king's approbation, never to correspond with the committees, but always with the assembly itself; which, indeed

\* By the decree of the 5th of October 1791, it was ordained, that as often as the king went to the assembly, he should place himself in an arm-chair, upon the left hand of the president, exactly alike, and on the same level with that in which the president himself sat. By another article of the same decree, when the president or any other deputy addressed the king, it was to be done by the new appellation of *King of the French*. The same was to be used in all messages to his majesty. This decree was repealed the very next day, after long and warm debates.

was

was appointed by the constitution, there being no mention made of committees.

The emigration being at this time considerable, and becoming every day more and more so, was one of the chief objects of the discontent and murmurs of the people. The king, who but too well foresaw the fatal consequences it would have, caused a proclamation to be published, recalling all gentlemen who had gone out of the kingdom, and tending to retain those who were inclined to emigrate. He at the same time ordered the ministers of war and the marine, to write a circular letter to the same effect, to the officers of their department. This measure produced an impression in favour of the king upon the minds of the people; but it was attended with this inconveniency, that it suggested to the assembly, who were then in discredit, the means of re-instating themselves in the public favour; and they succeeded, by a violent decree against emigration.

## CHAP. X.

*Promotions under the administration of M. Thevenard.—Duke of Orleans appointed admiral.—Motives of this appointment.—Projected changes in the ministry.—Resignation of M. de Montmorin.—Appointment of M. de Moustier to his place.—Afterwards retracted.—Motives.—Messrs. de Segur and Barthelemi refuse the department of foreign affairs.—M. de Lessart appointed.—Retreat of M. de Portail, war minister.—Intrigues to procure the nomination of M. de Narbonne to that place.—The conduct of that minister.—Singular proposal he made to the queen.—My first misunderstanding with the assembly.—Result.—Decree against the emigrants.—The king refuses his sanction.—Message from the king, carried by all the ministers.*

**M.** THEVENARD, about a fortnight before he resigned, made a general promotion in the marine, conformable to the

the new organization decreed by the assembly; and although this promotion had not been officially declared, yet, the most material articles, particularly the very remarkable promotion of the duke of Orleans, was known to the public, therefore it was not in my power to make any alteration; and in spite of my extreme repugnance to many, I was under the necessity of signing all the letters addressed to the officers included in that promotion. All that I could do, was by an alteration in the expression of the letter, to evince that the promotion had been decided on before my appointment to the administration. M. Thevenard had hurried this affair, because he believed, as he said to me, that the nomination of the duke of Orleans to the rank of admiral would insure the king a sufficient degree of popularity to enable him to keep the new assembly in proper bounds.

I was informed by M. de Montmorin, a few days after I entered into the ministry, that the changes which the king intended in the council consisted of, first, The nomination

of M. de Moustier to the department of foreign affairs; secondly, the dismissal of M. Duportail, minister of war; thirdly, the dismissal of the *Garde des Sceaux*, to whom I was to succeed, as soon as the answers were received from some persons whom the king had in view for the department of war and of the marine. M. de Montmorin, in giving up the department of foreign affairs, was to preserve his place in council, in quality of ancient minister, with a salary of 50,000 livres.

The only thing which displeased me in this arrangement, was the idea of being named *Garde des Sceaux*. I declared very plainly to M. de Montmorin, that I never would accept of that place, because my being raised to it might be imputed to ambitious views; whereas I wished to have it in my power to shew, what was really the case, that I had entered into the administration, in the present circumstances, for no other reason but in obedience to the king's repeated orders. And besides, as the new order of things had not taken place in the  
marine

marine department, I wished to be appointed to it, because there it would be more in my power to reconcile my determined adherence to the letter of the constitution with my obedience to the king; and I begged of M. de Montmorin to represent this to his majesty, as I was not sufficiently at my ease with him, to venture speaking upon a point which might displease him.

M. de Moustier, minister plenipotentiary at Berlin, was recalled, in order to be appointed to the department of foreign affairs, and came in great haste to Paris, according to his majesty's orders. Scarcely was the motive of his return known, than intrigues were formed to prevent his nomination. His reputation for talents, and the energy of his character, made him be regarded as dangerous for the revolution, and consequently animated against him all those who supported it. This cabal was reinforced by some intriguers, rash enough to desire places in the administration; and who, on purpose to succeed themselves, used every means to injure the character of



every person who was called to it. M. de Moustier was declared to be a violent aristocrat. Some deputies were made to speak against his nomination. The king was told that it would have a bad effect in the assembly, &c. On the other hand, the *Garde des Sceaux*, jealous of M. de Montmorin's credit with the king, and aspiring to obtain the chief influence in the choice of ministers, had been sensibly piqued at not being consulted on my nomination, which, as he told me, he would have prevented. He was no less displeased upon the present occasion, because the king had never spoken to him of his intentions respecting M. de Moustier; and therefore he greatly increased the uneasiness which had been given to his majesty on this subject. The result was, that M. de Moustier, instead of being minister of foreign affairs, was appointed ambassador to Constantinople, and the Count de Segur to succeed M. de Montmorin, who, in spite of all my intreaties to engage him to remain in his place, never ceased his endeavours to obtain leave to resign, till at last his resignation was

was accepted. His retreat was, at that time, a misfortune to the king, because it was the moment in which his services might have been most useful, and in which there was the least inconveniency to have been apprehended from the weakness of his character. The king and queen assured me that they had observed more firmness and decision in his conduct, since my admission into the ministry, which was imputed to his confidence in me, and his reliance on my support. In fact, we acted together with unanimity on all occasions; and what we had agreed to in private was seldom opposed in the council. It has been remarked, that the last months of the year 1791 formed the only period, perhaps, of the revolution, in which the king and council assumed the stile which became them, with the assembly.

The resignation of M. de Montmorin being accepted, the Count de Segur, who had already returned thanks to the king for his appointment, was to be installed the Sunday following; but an unforeseen circumstance

cumstance made him change his opinion, and threw the king into new difficulties. He happened to go, on Saturday, to the national assembly, where he found M. Duportail, who had come, accompanied by all the ministers, to answer certain unfounded accusations which had been made against him. He forgot himself so far as to enter into an abusive wrangle with the firebrands of the assembly, who, on finding that his impatience had carried him beyond all bounds, attacked him with the most gross abuse. This revolting scene, which M. Duportail entirely owed to his vivacity and want of address, disgusted M. de Segur so much with the office of minister, that he sent his resignation, or rather his refusal, to the king, the very next day; and the reason he gave was, that he was not endued with sufficient courage or moderation to bear such attacks as M. Duportail had been exposed to.

The bad success of these two nominations brought great discredit upon the council, and augmented the king's embarrassment.

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I again expostulated with M. de Montmorin to prevail with him to withdraw his resignation, which, I gave him to understand, was what the king greatly desired ; but I did not succeed ; and he himself proposed that the king should appoint, in his place, M. Barthelemi, who was then minister plenipotentiary in England, and a courier extraordinary was immediately sent to inform him of his nomination. The papers relating to foreign affairs were, in the interim, placed in the hands of M. de Lessart ; but as M. Barthelemi refused the situation, M. de Lessart was definitively appointed to it, leaving the place of *ministre d. l'interieure* vacant. M. de Montmorin would have remained in administration, if the king would have explicitly, and in direct terms, desired it ; but his majesty was greatly hurt, that a man, with whom he had been bred from his childhood, and whose resignation he had so long refused to accept, should persist in it ; and therefore the king would never condescend to speak to him on the subject.

The brutality with which the assembly received the justifications of M. Duportail having determined him to retire from administration, the friends of Count Louis de Narbonne were extremely active to get him appointed minister of war. M. Duport Duterre and Mr. de Lessart took upon themselves to speak of it to the king, who at first rejected the proposal. "I know M. de Narbonne better than you do," said he to them, "and I knew that he is unfit for the ministry." The bad success of this attempt did not rebuff them. They pressed me to join them, and to speak to the king in favour of M. de Narbonne. They solicited me through M. de Montmorin, who promised marvellous great things on the part of M. de Narbonne, whose greatest desire, as he told me, was to attach himself to me, to take my conduct for his model, and to pursue the same plans with me, &c. In answer to these fair speeches, I merely said, that not being acquainted with M. de Narbonne, I could not possibly say either good or

or bad of him, and that consequently all that I could do, was to be silent upon the subject.

M. de Montmorin, who had flattered himself, that in withdrawing from administration, he still should retain his place in council, saw this hope vanish. The king, who had the same idea, having spoken to M. Duport Dutertre and M. de Lessart upon that arrangement, they assured him that it was expressly contrary to the constitution, and that the assembly would not fail to object to it; that besides, the ministers of the department being alone responsible, ought alone to be admitted to join in the deliberations of the council; and that none of them would consent to remain and co-operate with one who was not responsible. The king, struck with the force of this objection, which had not occurred to him, renounced his plan with regard to M. de Montmorin, who, by this means, found himself deprived of his place and resources. His affairs being in such disorder, that his debts swallowed up his own revenue, I informed

formed his majesty of this, who granted him the sum of 50,000 livres a year from the fund of the secret expences belonging to the department of foreign affairs.

As the choice of a war minister could no longer be deferred, and as M. de Narbonne was the only person proposed to the king, his majesty was forced to surmount the extreme repugnance he had against appointing him to that situation. The day \* on which he was received into the council, the ministers informed him, in presence of the king, of a resolution they had taken against having any communication with the committees, but of always corresponding directly with the assembly, agreeably to the constitution. The motives which were given for this resolution appeared to him very wise, and he promised to adhere to it. The very next day, however, he changed his mind, and went to the committee of war, without mentioning his intentions to the king, or to the ministers. He afterwards

\* December 6, 1791.

gave as a reason for his conduct, that a communication with the committees appeared to him, on reflection, the surest means of making the ministers popular, and consequently rendering them more powerful and useful to his majesty. I contested this opinion, by insisting that a popularity acquired in this manner, could only be of short duration ; whereas a communication with the committees would perpetually expose the ministers to the greatest inconveniency, as nothing was so easy as to misinterpret their words, and give a false colouring to every thing they said ; and that their denial could have no weight in the assembly against the assertion of a committee, or of many of its members. That besides, it was neither consistent with order nor propriety, that the ministers should give the first example of deviating from the constitution ; and that it was an evident deviation to act in a manner which it did not authorize.

M. de Narbonne was intoxicated with the reception which he had met with at the  
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committee, and with the alacrity with which all he proposed had been adopted, therefore he did not approve of my reasons. He went, every day, both to the assembly and committees, and obtained every decree he demanded. The patriot journalists proclaimed his popularity, and he imagined it was so well established, that he might hope to extend its happy influence upon his colleagues.

In this state of affairs, and a very short time after his appointment as minister, he set off to visit the frontiers and the armies.

The ministers, dazzled, and perhaps jealous of his success, flattered themselves that they might obtain the same, by pursuing the same path; and from that time, without coming to any formal agreement upon the subject, or even consulting one another, each of them, individually, went occasionally to the committees. I alone adhered to the agreements we had all made, by which conduct I offended many members of the assembly, who construed it into contempt of the committees; and I was  
not

not long without feeling the effects of their resentment.

The revolt of the negroes of St. Domingo made it necessary to send a speedy and considerable assistance. I demanded of the assembly, in my own name, and under my own responsibility, the necessary sum for this expense. The assembly rejected my demand, upon pretence that it was not presented in a constitutional form; that it ought to have been made by the king himself. The pretensions of the assembly, in this instance, being contrary to the constitution, presented to me an opportunity of entering into a contest, in which I certainly should have had the advantage; but as this would have brought on long debates on some important articles of the constitution, and as such a discussion must have considerably retarded the succours to St. Domingo, which were so immediately required, I thought proper to defer the contest, determining, in my own mind, to seize the first favourable opportunity of reviving it. In the mean time, I proposed to the king to

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represent to the assembly, "that the form in which I had presented the demand of a necessary fund for sending assistance to St. Domingo was not contrary to the constitution, and desiring that they would take an affair of such importance into their immediate consideration."

The king consented to write a letter \* to that purport, and the assembly triumphed on the occasion, regarding it as a formal demand made by the king of the sum which had been irregularly demanded by me, and consequently an acquiescence in their censure of my demand.

This did not, however, prevent me from presenting, in the same form, a few days afterwards, a demand of the same nature, relative to an armament extraordinary at Toulon. The assembly did not hesitate in rejecting this second demand as they had done the first, and even declaring it unconstitutional. Some deputies observed, with indignation, that it was astonishing, after the lesson I had received, that I so soon fell

\* November 14, 1791.

into

into the same error ; on which account I was pretty generally censured. My colleagues reproached me for a conduct which threw discredit on the administration ; and as the constitution was not well understood by the public, few doubted but that the decree of the assembly was conformable to it, and that my dismissal would be the inevitable consequence of my headstrong conduct ; for in these terms they qualified the step I had taken.

A second letter, from the king to the assembly, exposed the fallacy of all this reasoning, for it contained a full explanation of every article of the constitution, applicable to this and every other case in which it was necessary for his majesty to make application directly from himself to the assembly ; by which it appeared, that my addressing them as minister, in this particular case, was according to the form prescribed by the constitution, and that the decree of censure was the only irregularity in the whole transaction. The consequence evidently was, that unless the assembly repealed their

first decree, I could not be considered as responsible for the mischiefs which might result from not sending succours to St. Domingo \*. This letter was expressed in a style which the council had not, for above a year, ventured to make the king assume; and the assembly were a good deal disconcerted. They got rid of this embarrassment, by sending the letter to be answered by the constitutional committee; which, however, was never answered. The assembly at the same time declared that this letter must be considered as a direct demand made by his majesty, and the sum which I required at first was accordingly granted.

All parties, except the Jacobins, applauded the energy displayed by the king on this occasion; and the obstinacy and ignorance of the assembly was so apparent, that it fell as much, in the present instance, in the estimation of the public, as it had done, a month before, by its insolent attempt of seating the king on the same level with their president.

\* *Vide* the Appendix, No. II.

The public attention was soon after engrossed by a violent decree, to deprive the king's brothers, as emigrants, of their right of succeeding to the throne, or even of being appointed regents of the kingdom, in case of a minority. The Abbé Fauchet, about the same time, distinguished himself by an absurd denunciation against M. de Lessart, minister *de l'intérieur*. The animosity of the Jacobin party was the greater against me, because of the king's letter, of which I was known to be the author, and also because I was the only minister who refused to have any communication with the committees. They thought proper, however, to let the advantage which I had gained over the assembly be forgotten, and not to attack me till I had lost some of my popularity, which I very soon did, through the injudicious zeal of the aristocratic journalists, who greatly injured me by their exaggerated encomiums.

At this time M. de Narbonne returned from his expedition to the frontiers. He had only been a fortnight absent. All the

world was surpris'd at the rapidity with which he had accomplished so long a journey in so short a time ; yet he gave as circumstantial an account of the state of the places and armies, as an inspector could have given after a careful examination of six months ; giving, at the same time, such a flattering representation of the state of the army and forts, that his brilliant report excited the most lively enthusiasm in the assembly. At this period, when a war with the Emperor appeared almost inevitable, a minister, who displayed so much activity, and seemed to possess so many resources, inspired the greatest security. This report being printed, and distributed through the capital, rais'd the popularity of M. de Narbonne and his credit in the assembly, to such a degree, that his friends began to think the war department a field too narrow for his talents. Prompted by his natural vanity, and by the counsels of Madame de Stael, M. de Narbonne demanded an audience of the queen, with whom he flattered himself he possessed more influence than he had with  
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the king, who never appeared to have any confidence in him. His object in this audience was to read a memorial to her majesty, upon the actual state of France, and the critical position in which the king stood. After expatiating on the difficulty of re-establishing the king's authority, and saving the state, he proposed, as the only remedy, to place at the head of government, in quality of first minister, a man who, either by good fortune and address, or by real merit, had acquired a reputation for abilities, wisdom, activity, &c. and who possessed such a degree of popularity as to overawe and direct the assembly; one who, in addition to these advantages, possessed an unshaken fidelity, an unbounded attachment to the king, and to all that concerned his majesty's interest. Such a person being once found, the present emergency required that the king and queen should place an entire and exclusive confidence in him, but without allowing it to appear; and that their majesties should devolve on him the power of forming a new administration, and of naming to all the



different employments the persons he judged most capable.

“ All this is very fine,” said the queen, after having heard the memorial, “ but unfortunately impracticable ; for where can we find such an unparalleled and admirable person for a minister ? And even if it were possible to find such a one, the king could not give him all the powers you mention, because, by the constitution, his majesty has not the right of appointing a *prime* minister. He is obliged to name six, each of whom must have the full direction in his own department.”

This objection did not disconcert M. de Narbonne. He was very certain, he said, that the king might easily prevail on the assembly to depart from the strict letter of the constitution, for the sake of getting such a man at the head of affairs.

“ Well,” said her majesty, “ suppose the assembly to have this complaisance, still I ask, where is the wonderful man to be found ?”

To this M. de Narbonne, with apparent confusion, and with the voice of modesty, answered,

answered, "that many people supposed that he himself, whether from nature, or education, or good fortune, or all three, nearly united all the qualities he had enumerated."

The queen, bursting into laughter, only said these words, *êtes vous fou, M. de Narbonne ?* After this, he exhausted his eloquence to convince her majesty, that what he proposed proceeded only from an excess of zeal for the king's service ; and remarking that she still seemed to hold his proposal in contempt, he fell on his knees, and intreated her, with tears, to consider his conduct with indulgence.

The following day the queen gave me an account of this extraordinary scene, in the very words I have related it.

It will readily be imagined, that M. de Narbonne did not mention this step, nor its consequences, to any of his colleagues\*. He always preserved, with them, that stile of pleasantry and easy gaiety which characterize him. He expressed a particular regard

\* The queen having desired me not to speak of this, I did not mention it to the other ministers.

for me, and told me, that he greatly approved of the conduct I had adopted with regard to the assembly, and that he would be guided by no other advice than mine. His intention might possibly be sincere, but he did not long persevere in it ; for the very next day, having to demand an extraordinary fund from the assembly, for the expense of the troops to be sent to St. Domingo, he neither spoke of it in the council nor to his colleagues ; but he proposed to the king to sign a letter, in which his majesty should demand the necessary fund *in his own name*. M. de Narbonne's reason for this was, that the constitutional committee, not having decided upon the form in which the demand ought to be made, it was prudent not to renew the debate at present, as it would only retard the expedition. The king did not doubt but that the measure was concerted with the other ministers, yet he hesitated before he signed this letter ; and when he was prevailed upon, he added a postscript, in which he declared himself still of opinion, that the  
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form adopted by the minister of marine was constitutional.

It would be difficult to calculate the fatal effect which this letter produced. It was considered as a proof of weakness and inconsistency on the king's part, and of a want of unanimity among the ministers. From that time we began to be attacked with greater insolence.

The decrees pronounced against the king's brothers had not entirely satisfied the Jacobins, who governed the majority of the assembly by their influence or threats: their rancour required another violent decree against the emigrants, and the assembly satisfied them in this point, by issuing one, which not only exceeded its powers, but was even contrary to the spirit of the constitution. This was so evident, that after a minute discussion, the king's ministers unanimously advised him to refuse his sanction. But as the king had never yet employed this prerogative, the ministers were of opinion, that to prevent its having a bad effect upon the public, and  
likewise

likewise that it might strike the assembly with some degree of awe; it would be prudent to give to this measure an unusual degree of solemnity, by ordering the refusal of the sanction to be carried to the assembly in the form of a royal message, by all the ministers, whose presence would mark their unanimous agreement; and the *Garde des Sceaux*, who should deliver the message, might insert in his speech some sentences, enforcing the wisdom and justice of his majesty's motives for refusing his sanction to the decree.

The 12th of November being the day fixed for the message of the king, all the ministers met at the house of the *Garde des Sceaux*, that they might go together to the assembly; before we set out, he called for and drank two large glasses of water. I was afraid he was ill; but on mentioning my apprehensions, he answered, "No, it is only a precaution I take, every time I go to the assembly. The blood boils in my veins when I hear these fellows speak; and if I did not take something to cool myself, I should

I should get into a passion, and be apt to tell them very disagreeable truths."

"I hope," said I, "all this water will only moderate the passion, without weakening those truths you have to tell them, be they agreeable or not."

"Fear not," replied he.

The appearance of all the ministers, and a message from the king, (the first the assembly had ever received, and of which the object was entirely unknown,) excited a general and profound silence in the hall and in the tribunes. That of the tribunes could only be imputed to curiosity; but in the silence of the assembly there was at least as much uneasiness as surprise. The *Garde des Sceaux* began by laying upon the table the different decrees which the king had sanctioned, among which there were two or three which the assembly had expected, for some time, with a good deal of impatience. He terminated this first part of his mission by informing the assembly, that with respect to the decree against the emigrants, the king *would examine it*; which signified,

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in constitutional language, that the decree was refused. He then drew from his pocket the paper which contained his discourse. Unluckily the water operated, at that moment, with so much violence, that his colour forsook him, his hands trembled, and his voice failed him so much, that he could hardly read. And what was still more unlucky, the first phrase, instead of relating to the subject of the message, mentioned the refusal of the sanction. He was not permitted to proceed farther. A general murmur arose. All the deputies spoke at once. Every one insisted on being heard, but no silence was to be obtained. They all vociferously exclaimed, "Mr. Le President, we cannot listen to this message." "This message is unconstitutional." "It is the motives for refusing the sanction." "Call the minister of justice to order." "Mr. Le President, the constitution—" "Mr. Le President, allow me to make a motion of order." This tumult lasted seven or eight minutes. The ministers waited the issue of it standing.

At length the president put it to the vote, Whether they should hear the message, or pass to the order of the day. The *Garde des Sceaux*, entirely disconcerted by this tumultuous scene, sat down with the other ministers, giving up all hopes of being heard.

To prevent such an unexpected and unfortunate termination of the business, I asked leave to speak. They refused to hear me, and the motion for the order of the day was carried ; after which the president told me that I was now allowed to speak. I rose and said, that I now had nothing to say ; but had I been heard before the last motion was carried, I should have informed the assembly, that the object of the king's message was to acquaint them with the new measures adopted by his majesty for stopping the emigration. This renewed the tumult ; one party insisting on hearing the message, and recalling the decree just pronounced ; the other exclaiming for its execution. But the ministers remaining passive, and the *Garde des Sceaux*, who ought to have represented to the assembly, that they



they had no right, by the constitution, to refuse to hear any message from the king, being silent, the order of the day was adopted.

The single sentence which I had pronounced on this occasion was incorrectly given in the *Moniteur*, in which, after the words "*stopping the emigration*," which I had actually pronounced, the editor of the paper added what I had not pronounced, namely, the words "*of the officers of marine*." I expostulated against this false account, in a letter which I caused to be inserted in the same Journal, and in which I affirmed, that I had not mentioned the officers of marines ; and that as none of them had deserted their posts since my entering the ministry, there was no need of proposing to the king any new measure respecting them. It will appear in the sequel, what animosity this letter, innocent as it was, excited against me.

## CHAP. XI.

*Nomination of M. Cabier de Gerville.—The ministers dine at his house, with Petion, and some of the members of the municipality.—Decree against the priests.—The king refuses his sanction.—Denunciation against me.—The consequences of this affair.—Expulsion of Bonjour.*

**M.** CAHIER DE GERVILLE, who was appointed minister of home affairs, in the place of M. de Lessart \*, was formerly an advocate in the parliament of Paris. Although his talents did not exceed mediocrity, he was esteemed for his probity and assiduity in business. He was then substitute of the *procureur de la commune*, and enjoyed great popularity. This consideration determined his friend, the *Garde des Sceaux*, to propose his appointment, as a means of rendering the king more

\* November 30, 1791.

popular. The effect of such temporizing measures, however agreeable for a short time, is seldom of durable utility. The present state of affairs required boldness and intrepidity. The people generally place their confidence, particularly in times of revolution, in persons who possess such qualities ; for which reason, in popular assemblies, we constantly find that the majority declare in favour of the orator who has the best lungs, and is most violent in his opinions.

If the king had determined upon some vigorous measure, it would certainly have been wise to have preceded it by an act of popularity. But these multiplied concessions, without any act of vigour, were much more hurtful than useful, as the king acquired only a short-lived popularity, at the expence of dignity, and of the small remains of power he still possessed.

A few days after M. Cahier de Gerville's appointment, he invited the ministers to dinner at his small lodgings in the *Rue Beaubourg*. Petion, who had just been elected mayor of Paris, was also invited, with some members

members of the municipality. The intention of the new minister was to associate us in his popularity, or at least to prove to us, that what the *Garde des Sceaux* had said was not exaggerated. The mayor and members of the municipality seemed to examine us minutely, and had reason to be satisfied with our words and behaviour, for we shewed them great politeness, and treated them as if they had been our companions. We played at billiards with them, and were always of their opinion. I particularly fixed my attention upon Petion, for the king and queen were prejudiced, at that time, in his favour, and had wished him to be elected in preference to M. de la Fayette, when they stood candidates for the mayoralty. As Petion and I were the strongest at billiards, we played several parties together, and I was for some time left alone with him. His countenance, which at first sight appeared open and agreeable, upon a nearer examination, was insipid and devoid of expression. His want of information and heavy elocution, meanly trivial or absurdly

bombast, made me consider him as a man by no means dangerous. I even imagined, that by flattering his vanity or ambition, he might be rendered useful to the king. His conduct has proved how much I was deceived ; and I cannot, even at this distance of time, reflect without pain on my having been deceived by so silly a knave.

The assembly, whose credit seemed ever supported by acts of violence, had passed a decree, enjoining the unconstitutional priests to take a new oath, or to quit the kingdom. The bishops, then at Paris, were convinced that the king, who had already manifested the deepest regret for having sanctioned former decrees against the clergy, would be happy to have motives and means for refusing that one. They therefore determined to draw up a memorial against it, and applied to me to present it to his majesty. I had a *private* correspondence with the bishop of Uzes on this subject ; for at that time a minister could have no public communication with a bishop, without awakening suspicion against himself.

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The king appeared much affected by this memorial, and said to me, with the energy which he ever shewed in the cause of religion, "They may be assured I never will sanction it: but the difficulty is to know whether I ought simply to refuse my assent, and to assign the motives of my refusal, or to temporize, on account of the present circumstances. Endeavour," continued he, "to discover the opinion of your colleagues, before the subject is mentioned in the council." I remarked to the king, that he was not, by the constitution, obliged to assign the motives of his refusal; and that although the assembly ought to be pleased to see his majesty give up that important prerogative, it was so ill disposed, that it might refuse to listen to his motives, and might even reproach him with this breach of the constitution, as if it were a violation of his oath; that to temporize was only a display of weakness, and would encourage the assembly to become still more enterprising; and besides that, a simple negative was at once more sure and more proper. The affair

was discussed the day after, in a committee of the ministers, and the indispensable necessity of a negative was acknowledged by all.

At the following council, this measure was proposed to the king, who adopted it, with extreme satisfaction. But this interval of happiness was interrupted by the proposal which the minister of the home department made to him, of appointing constitutional priests to the queen's chapel and his own, as the surest means of silencing the malecontents, and convincing the people of his sincere attachment to the constitution. "No, sir, no," said the king, in a firm voice; "let no one speak to me upon this subject; since liberty of worship is made general, certainly I ought to enjoy it as well as others."

The warmth with which he pronounced these words astonished us, and silenced M. Cahier de Gerville.

The denunciation against M. de Lessart was rejected by the assembly, after hearing his justification, in spite of the declamations

of Brissot and Condorcet, the calumnies of the Abbé Fauchet, and the wishes of Madame de Stael. That lady was desirous that M. de Narbonne should be appointed to the department of foreign affairs. So far from attempting to conceal this, she had the sincerity to own it to M. de Lessart himself, in a letter of four pages, in which she endeavoured to prove, "that his honour, the welfare of the state, and the king's interest, required his resigning a place, which his bad health and his character rendered him unequal to, in circumstances so difficult." This letter was read in the ministerial committee by M. de Lessart himself.

The storm which had been so long preparing against me at length broke out, and Cavelier, clerk of the office of marine at Brest, came forward as my accuser. This man, who was as great a knave as the revolution has produced, had nothing more urgent, upon his first arrival in Paris, than to come and pay his respects to me, and to demand a more advantageous place than that which he was then in,



"Are not you a deputy?" said I.

"Yes," replied he; "but I do not regard that."

"But do you not regard the constitution, neither?" said I.

"How do you mean?" resumed he.

"I mean, that you ought to know," returned I, "that the constitution does not admit of your filling a superior employment, until a certain time after the expiration of your deputation; consequently you can no longer insist upon your demand, as I cannot grant it without violating the constitution."

"You are very rigid, sir," said he.

"Not at all; I am only faithful to my oath," said I, and left him.

Such was my accuser; and the pretence of his denunciation was the assertion which I had inserted in the *Moniteur*, concerning the officers of the marine. But the real motive was to stop the reforms which I had announced or ordered in the principal departments of the administration of the sea-ports, where an immense system of pil-  
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laging, and all kinds of fraud existed. It was therefore easy for Cavellier to excite against me all who, like himself, profited by such abuses; and accordingly memorials, subscribed by many names, supporting his accusation, were sent from Brest and Toulon. Those employed at the port of Rochefort, however, had the firmness and the integrity to resist all the manœuvres of Cavellier and the other Jacobins, for obtaining from them a memorial, in the same strain with those of Brest and Toulon. On the contrary, they transmitted to the king, to the assembly, and to myself, addresses, in which they declared, "that having been strongly solicited to join my accuser, truth and justice obliged them to acknowledge, that they had only praises to bestow upon the wisdom and activity of my administration."

The memorials which came from the ports of Brest and Toulon were sent to the committee of marine, as was that of Cavellier, who was a member of that committee, and who caused himself to be appointed reporter

reporter of the whole affair. He was powerfully seconded by Malassis and Rouyer. The first was printer to the marine at Brest, and had accumulated above 600,000 livres, by the abuses which existed in that employment. The second was a deputy from Nîmes, as remarkable, in the assembly, for the strength of his voice, as for his audacity and stupidity. The chief confidant of this man was one Esmenard, a journalist, who was the framer of the motions which this noisy deputy vociferated from the tribunes.

This same journalist was also known to me. He had solicited the office of consul, and confessed to me, that Rouyer's violence arose from his hopes, that if I should be deprived of my office, it would be given to a certain friend of his own, from whose influence, as soon as he should be appointed minister of the marine, Rouyer expected to obtain the cross of St. Louis, of which he was very ambitious, although he had never served; and he also expected, by the same influence, to get a contract for furnishing

nishing provisions for the navy for a particular company, who had promised him a reward of a hundred thousand crowns, in case he succeeded.

I was still so much affected by the rude and indecent conduct of the assembly towards M. du Portail, of the insolent calumnies of the Abbé Fauchet, with respect to M. de Lessart, and with the weakness which those ministers had shewn in their defence, that I ardently wished for an opportunity of expressing my indignation against these contemptible denunciators; and I can say with truth, that the accusation of Cavelier gave me infinitely more pleasure than pain. My answer was soon ready. I went to the assembly the 5th of December, and pronounced, with the utmost vehemence, a discourse, in which the following phrases (addressed, with a look of the most profound contempt, to the Abbé Fauchet) were generally applauded: "I have waited with impatience, until a formal accusation against myself should furnish me with an opportunity of submitting to the wisdom and to the justice

justice of the national assembly some reflections, to induce them to receive with circumspection the perpetual accusations, so often unfoundedly renewed, against the principal agents of the executive power. It belongs, gentlemen, to your dignity, to prove to all France, that this august temple of liberty is not a post from which the envenomed arrows of calumny can with impunity be darted against innocence, and the best friends of the country. A denunciation founded upon truth is a duty, when it can be useful to the public ; but calumny is a crime which should ever be pursued by the vengeance of the laws, wherever it seeks refuge. The privilege of wounding the person, or attacking the life of a citizen, should belong to no one. But if this horrid privilege were allowed to exist, its most criminal abuse would be to direct it against those employed in the public service, because it would oblige them to consume, in their own defence, that time which they owe to their country. In short, gentlemen, it is the interest of the constitution, and of  
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its truest friends, that it should be executed. To the king is entrusted the important care of watching over it. The ministers are his chief agents, and they ought ever to be treated with becoming respect. To connive at any attack against the dignity of their characters, is to weaken the springs of government, and tends to destroy the authority of the national representation itself. Nevertheless, if the numerous enemies, which the strict execution of our duty to the public may raise against us, expect to overcome our zeal by their calumnies, they will be disappointed ; for I will take upon me to declare, in the name of all my colleagues, that we consider such attacks, from such a quarter, as honourable for us, and of course they will rather animate than depress our exertions."

The marine committee, puzzled to refute the proofs I had brought, and the facts I had established, in my defence, did not present their report of the accusation against me till the end of February, though the denunciation had been made in the month  
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of November. After the report was read in the assembly, Cavelier, and five others of the committee, proposed a decree of accusation against me; but this was unanimously rejected. They then proposed, that I should be declared to have lost the confidence of the nation; but this also was rejected, by a majority of two-thirds of the members. They then demanded the *appel nominal*; and as it was past twelve at night, many of the deputies, convinced I should still have a sufficient majority, retired. There was, in fact, a majority, but of fifteen only. On the following morning, at the opening of the assembly, when there were only two hundred members present, a decree was proposed and passed, to present a memorial to the king, containing the causes of the assembly's dissatisfaction with me; and M. Herault de Sechelles was mean enough to undertake to draw up this memorial. The success of this manœuvre was not yet sufficient for my enemies. There was hardly a day passed, in which complaints of my administration did not  
arrive,

arrive, through their means, from the different sea-ports ; but these accusations were so absurd, and so easily refuted, that they did not give the smallest uneasiness, or cause me to deviate a hair's-breadth from the line of conduct I had traced for myself.

The following instance, among many, is a specimen of the means employed against me : An officer, named d'Estimauville, was recalled from India, upon account of a private quarrel. Being, soon after his arrival in Paris, destitute of money, he addressed a memorial to me, demanding to be comprehended in the distribution of a gratification granted by the assembly to about twenty soldiers, who had been sent back to France from Pondicherry, by M. de Fresnes the governor, upon account of seditious practices. The decree, granting this shameful gratification, contained the names of those who were to share in it. I could not add the name of M. d'Estimauville to such a list, without dishonouring him and exposing myself. But his pressing necessity  
prevented



prevented him from weighing the motives of my refusal, and he complained loudly of it as an act of harshness and injustice. Some time after, he fell sick. The Jacobins being informed that there existed an individual who had a complaint against me, made him be sought after every where. One of their agents at last discovered his lodgings, in a miserable little chamber, to which he was confined by poverty as well as sickness. The agent introduced himself, and told him, that a committee being informed that he had cause of complaint against M. Bertrand, had deputed him to receive his deposition against that minister, and, at the same time, to give him the assistance of which he stood so much in need. The agent accompanied these words with a purse of gold, which he laid upon the table. This proposal awakened in the mind of M. d'Estimauville the sentiments of honour natural to him. Indignant at being thought capable of serving as an instrument of hatred to the Jacobins, he rejected their purse and turned their agent out of doors.

He

He likewise gave a public account of the affair, in a letter to the president of the national assembly, which was inserted in several journals\*.

This conduct, which was so much the more commendable, as it was really dangerous, interested all persons of honour in his favour, and procured him assistance which he might accept without blushing.

This increased the rage of the Jacobins against me; but the more pains they took to disturb my tranquillity, the more I affected to be at my ease. My house was open to the best company twice a week. I gave frequent dinners, and sometimes concerts, which began exactly at the hour of the evening sitting of the assembly; so that my attention was engrossed by harmonious sounds, at the very time when the hall of the assembly resounded with violent declamations against me. These declamations often originated in my own office, where I had, unluckily, more than one

\* See the Journals and Mercury of January and February 1793.

Jacobin ; not to mention the clerk Bonjour, whose expulsion would have been one of the first acts of my administration, if the king had not feared the consequences of such a step. His majesty insisted upon having it deferred, until I could find the means of dismissing him, without exposing myself to danger. With a view to this, I devised a new plan of arrangement in my office, more economical than the former, in which the department of the funds, of which Bonjour was first clerk, was entirely suppressed. At the same time, I discovered a piece of knavery committed by him, and of which I had sufficient proofs to have subjected him to shame and punishment.

My new plan of arrangement having been laid before the council, and signed by the king, I delayed the execution until Bonjour's accounts for December were examined. When I had finished that business, I informed him of that part of the new plan in which he was interested. The moment he understood that his department was suppressed, the most violent indications

dications of rage appeared in his countenance. He was for some time unable to speak ; but when he had regained the use of his tongue, he told me " that the king might, if he would, suppress his department, but that he could not deprive him of his situation of first clerk, because he was the oldest clerk in the marine office, and that he had decrees in his favour, which he knew how to make advantage of."

" I hope," answered I, calmly, " that I also know how to make the king's orders be executed. I shall give you notice of them to-morrow morning, at nine o'clock. Don't fail to be at the office."

The next day I went there, accompanied by two clerks, whom I foresaw I should stand in need of. I ordered him, in the king's name, to give up the titles, papers, and documents of his department, and the keys of all the closets, presses, and other repositories of his papers. He answered, with more coolness than he had shewn the preceding day, that he had consulted his friends, and lawyers very well informed

upon the subject, who had all advised him not to obey this order, and that he would act accordingly. After having in vain endeavoured to make him hear reason, I drew up a formal account of his refusal, desiring him to dictate, and afterwards to sign his answers. This he did accordingly; after which, I ordered that a justice of the section should be brought directly, to take an inventory of all his papers, and seal up his repositories, according to the forms of law, and at the expence of Bonjour. This measure, which his friends, it is probable, had not foreseen, disconcerted him greatly.

“How, sir? at my expence?” cried he.

“Yes, undoubtedly, sir. Don’t imagine that the nation is to pay for your disobedience.”

“If that is the case, there are my papers and my keys. Take every thing,” said he.

“No, sir,” answered I, “I will take nothing; but I will receive from you whatever the orders of your sovereign shall oblige you to put into my hands;” and I received, accordingly, all that he had to  
give

give up; and a list was made, which he signed.

This business, which lasted two hours, being over, I produced my proofs against him, and made him acknowledge the writing before the two clerks, whom I had brought with me.

“ You have made me,” said I, “ lose a great deal of time ; and were I to treat you as you deserve, it should cost you dear. The first of these papers is a memorial of yours to the Marechal de Castries, by which you persuaded him to grant to a contractor 300,000 livres, who asked 600,000, under the false pretence that he was 600,000 livres in advance to government ; whilst the second, written in your own hand, proves that you, at that time, knew government to be 500,000 livres in advance to him. He died, soon after, a bankrupt ; and the government lost 800,000 livres by your negligence or treachery. My memorial on this subject is ready, which I will address to the assembly, if you make any complaint about your dismissal.”

This was enough for him ; and far from murmuring, I heard that he every where applauded the new organization of the marine office ; of which, the greatest advantage, in my eyes, was the removal of this worthless man. The same day an affair took place, which, although of less importance, produced a very good effect in my office, and re-established the subordination which the frenzy of the revolution had considerably weakened.

A young clerk, who had obtained a place in the marine office, through the interest of one of the queen's waiting-women, came and complained to me, in a very cavalier manner, for not having sufficiently augmented his salary, although I had, in reality, very nearly doubled it.

" If you are not satisfied with the augmentation," said I, without taking my eyes from the paper on which I was writing, " to oblige you, I shall restore you to your former salary."

" You seem to be in jest, but I am in earnest," said he, very impertinently.

" Very

“ Very well, sir,” added I, “ then I must inform you that I am in earnest also; and I now tell you, very seriously, to make use of another style when you speak to me, for I will not permit you to continue that which you have used.”

“ In what style must I speak to you, sir? we are all *citizens*. I am a free man, I hope.”

“ Yes, sir, perfectly free ; so entirely so, that I now inform you, that you belong no more to this office : so you are free to go where you please ; for it is to be hoped that I may use the freedom of dismissing a clerk, with whom I am dissatisfied.”

He went out threatening me that he would have the queen informed. When I mentioned the affair to her majesty, she declared that she did not so much as know him, having never before heard his name ; and that I had done well in dismissing him.

It was to some fellows of this stamp, and several of them in similar situations, clerks



and secretaries, that the greatest atrocities of the revolution are to be attributed.

At the time that I turned off these two worthless fellows, I had the misfortune to lose the respectable M. Malezieu, whom I regretted the more, as his death was hastened by chagrin for the persecutions raised against me, which he thought had been occasioned by the numbers of *congés* he had persuaded me to grant. I in vain assured him that I had no cause to reproach him, for I was satisfied of the justice of every act he had ever proposed to me. But the mortal blow was already struck, and he fell a prey to the delicacy and sensibility of his mind.

## CHAP. XII.

*Constitutional guards of the king.—Proposals to the king, respecting the formation of his household.—The treasury inform the king that they could no longer pay any part of the civil list in specie.—My proposal to the king for procuring him money.—Insubordination in the ports.—M. de Lajaille is assassinated at Brest.—My complaint to the assembly, and to the Garde des Sceaux, on that subject.—A visit from the president of the marine committee.—The committee determine upon a decree of accusation against me.—I am acquainted with this at midnight.—Shameful conduct of the Intendant de Marine at Brest.*

**A**s Bonjour's treachery to M. de Fleurieu had not been punished, but, on the contrary, had obliged M. Thevenard to be more attentive to him than he would otherwise have been, the expulsion of that clerk was considered as an act of remarkable boldness.

boldness. The king and queen, however, expressed their satisfaction. I was congratulated upon it as a victory by many of my friends, and my other clerks thanked me for having freed them from the disgrace of having so worthless an associate. So much were all ideas of courage and energy lost, at this period, particularly in the minds of the ministers, that the slight merit of not acting as a coward was admired as heroism.

A short time after the rising of the first assembly, the king employed himself in forming a plan for raising the eighteen hundred men, decreed by the constitution for his household troops. He deliberated long on the best method of executing this. The necessity of making great sacrifices to popularity induced him to compose this guard of officers and soldiers taken half from the national guards, and half from the line: but by a mistake, of which the consequences have been very fatal, instead of choosing that half, which was to be taken from the national guards, out of the body of national guards

guards of Paris, where it was of great importance that he should be popular, and where the character of those chosen could be better known, his majesty was prevailed upon to allow a certain number to be named by each department of France. The effect was, that those departments where men of worth presided, sent very good men; but others sent a set of worthless fellows, who, soon after their arrival at Paris, were received in the Jacobin club, where they were prompted to make daily accusations, ridiculous in reality, but very fit to excite the people against their comrades of the king's guard, which at length brought about the fatal decree of the 30th of May, by which the whole body of the king's household troops were dismissed, and their commander, the duke of Brissac, accused and sent prisoner to Orleans.

The formation of these household troops excited the most lively jealousy among the national guards at Paris. Continual disputes occurred between the two corps, which would certainly have occasioned bloodshed,

bloodshed, had not the king ordained that they should do duty at the palace alternately ; assuring them, at the same time, that the highest proof they could give him of their attachment would be to live amicably together. The new guard did every thing in their power to cement an union, so necessary to the safety of the royal family : but it happened too often that some of the national guards, more envious or irritable than the rest, complained that the king and queen spoke oftener, and with more complacency, to the new guards than to them. The constraint and vexation which their majesties must have suffered, from those despicable disputes and quarrels, may be easily conceived.

The emigration of the principal civil officers of the household made it be expected, that the installation of the guards would be followed by a new civil arrangement in the court. It was supposed that the king, from a desire of conciliating the minds of the people, would form this establishment in the most popular manner. All those  
persons,

persons, of the one sex as well as the other, who flattered themselves with some situation in the household, were continually teasing the ministers to prevail on the king and queen to conclude that business, each of them hinting, that their being appointed would give general satisfaction, and greatly promote the king's popularity.

Convinced, as I was, that the only permanent popularity which the king could acquire must arise from a vigorous conduct, I declined all interference in this affair: but the other ministers insisted so much upon it in the council, that the king was at last obliged to explain himself. He expressed neither a great desire to complete his household, nor an unwillingness, but only observed, that the thing appeared to him extremely delicate as well as difficult.

"I feel," said he, "that the queen cannot, without inconveniency, retain the wives of the emigrants about her, and I have already spoken to her upon the subject: but it cannot be expected that she is to form her society of Madame Petion,  
Madame

Madame Condorcet, and women of that stamp. With respect to myself, those whose services were most agreeable to me, have deserted me ; and amongst those who remain, there are some who are the torment of my life: for instance, there is Chauvelin, who is a spy in my family, always commenting upon what is said, and giving a false account of all that passes."

"Why, then, does not your majesty dismiss him?" said I.

"From regard to his father's memory," answered his majesty.

After the council was over, I proposed, that, since M. de Chauvelin acted in a manner so reprehensible, his majesty might dismiss him directly from his service; explaining the motives in the letter by which he signified to him his dismissal; and that if M. de Chauvelin should give himself any airs on the occasion, the king's letter might be published in the newspapers. But this measure was too severe for the king; and he soon after got rid of M. de Chauvelin, by sending him as minister plenipotentiary  
to

to England, under the direction of the Abbé Perigord, bishop of Autun, who was, in reality, the confidential minister, although, from particular circumstances, he could not, with propriety, appear at the British court.

With regard to the household establishment, the king dexterously avoided giving a definitive answer, by ordering each of the ministers to draw up a separate plan for the regulation of his house, and that of the queen; and also a list of the persons whom they judged proper to fill the different places.

The ministers agreed to postpone this discussion, until almanacks could be procured of the principal courts of Europe, from which they might form a plan for the new establishment; and by this means the king gained time, which was his aim.

The fund of the civil list was divided into twelve equal payments, and placed in the chest of M. Tourteau de Septeuil, who was at once the king's *valet de chambre* and treasurer of the civil list. These payments

were



were made in assignats, except the sum of seventy-five thousand livres, which the king desired he might receive in specie; but at the end of November 1791, the commissioners of the national treasury informed M. Septeuil, that upon account of the extreme scarcity of money, they could no longer give the above sum to his majesty in specie; and that it must in future be paid in assignats.

The king mentioned this in council, and appeared much affected at the thoughts that it would not be any longer in his power to pay, in specie, several expences foreign to his personal service, which he was in use to draw from his private purse.

“I can no longer,” said he, “have ten louis at my disposal; for if it be discovered that I endeavour to procure gold, I shall be suspected of a project to escape. Perhaps I shall even be accused of monopolizing the specie of the kingdom, with a view to depreciate assignats.”

I immediately took up my pen, and wrote the following note, which I put into the  
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the king's hands, a moment before the council broke up :

“ I have a certain means of procuring for the king, unknown to any one, the sum his majesty stands in need of ; and I beg to receive his orders on the subject.”

After the council was over, the king approached me, and said, with a smile, “ It is well. Come and speak to me to-morrow morning.”

The next day, on entering the king's apartment, I read, in his countenance, that my proposal pleased him. His only uneasiness was, his fear of my being exposed to danger. When I had made him easy on this point, he expressed his satisfaction for my zeal, and approved of the plan I proposed for procuring the money.

“ It is not for myself I want it,” said he, “ for my expences are paid in assignats ; but it is for old servants, whom I have always paid in money ; also for charitable uses, and to enable me occasionally to furnish the queen and my sister with a few louis, in exchange for their assignats.”

Before the end of December, I was happy in having it in my power to inform the king that I had four thousand louis d'or at his service. His majesty approved of my bringing them myself, to avoid having a third person in the confidence; and accordingly I went to the palace several mornings, with five hundred louis in my pocket.

On one of those occasions, I arrived just as the king returned from mass; and only thinking of getting rid of my load, I went up to his majesty, and begged his permission to follow him; the king looked at me, and after a moment's hesitation, answered, "*Oui, oui, venez.*"

This answer was heard by several persons who were in the council chamber, who smiled, and bowed their head to me in a complimentary manner, for which I could not guess a reason. The marechal de Noailles, who was present, said to me, taking me by the hand, "I congratulate you."

"Upon what, M. le Marechal?" replied I.

"Upon

"Upon the king's granting you the *entrée* into his chamber."

"Why I enter every day," returned I.

"What, when the king is dressing?"

"No," said I; "but—"

"Well," interrupted he, "in that case I repeat my congratulations; for at this hour no one is admitted to the king, except the officers *de sa garde robe*, and a few particular friends, to whom he grants the favour; which, once obtained, is always continued."

"If that be the case," said I, "as I have to speak to the king, I will wait till he is dressed."

I accordingly did so, in spite of the marshal's advice to the contrary, that the king might not suppose that I took advantage of the service I rendered him, to gain any favour whatever; but when he was dressed, and every body had left the apartment, I desired the chief *valet de chambre* to inform his majesty that I waited his orders. As soon as I entered, the king inquired what had become of me, and told me that he imagined I was following him. I answered,

that when I requested an audience, I had not recollected that it was the hour of his *toilette*; but seeing his majesty was going to dress, I chose to wait until it was over.

“What, are you afraid of the powder?” said he, smiling.

Without making any answer, I laid the louis on the table, and soon after withdrew.

Meanwhile, in spite of my exertions, insubordination and disorder made a rapid progress in the sea-ports, particularly at Brest, where the intendant of marine, M. Beaupreau, being one of the principal members of the Jacobin club, regularly communicated to that society all the letters he received from the minister.

The nomination of M. de la Jaille to the command of one of the vessels, destined to carry succour to St. Domingo, occasioned great disturbances at Brest. That distinguished officer was assaulted by a mob of more than three thousand persons. He received several wounds, and owed his life to the courage of an honest and vigorous *chaircutier*, who interposed

posed in his behalf ; and by their mutual efforts they defended themselves till the guard came and relieved them both.

The municipality of Brest found no other means of saving M. de la Jaille than that of throwing him into prison, and giving hopes to the atrocious villains, who thirsted for his blood, that this aristocrate would be brought to justice ; for aristocracy was the only crime that was laid to his charge.

Upon the account which I gave in council of this unhappy affair, it was decreed, that immediate orders should be given to the municipality for the enlargement of M. de la Jaille, and the prosecution of the authors of the riot, which had taken place in open day, and of which all the inhabitants of Brest were witnesses. The king also desired to see the brave *chaircutier* who had saved M. de la Jaille's life, and ordered the minister of the home department to write to him to come to Paris. A few days after this brave and worthy fellow arrived, and desired no other reward than the honour of being presented to the king. His majesty

gave him a very fine sabre, and a gold medal, upon which was engraved, "*Given by the king to l' Auverjeat, chaircutier at Brest, as a reward for the generous intrepidity with which he exposed his life to save that of a citizen.*"

The orders given by the minister of justice remained unexecuted. M. de la Jaille was still in prison, under pretence that his being set at liberty would endanger his life; and the members of the tribunal of justice, apprehending that the prosecution of the rioters would occasion an attack against themselves, had not yet ventured to commence the process. I in vain represented in council, and in the assembly, that the impunity with which such crimes were committed was the motive upon which the officers of marine founded their refusal of taking any command. When I gave an account of this fact in council, M. de Narbonne took me up in the following terms: "Do all the officers refuse? Am I to understand, that if we had any uneasiness with respect to the disposition of England, and  
that

that I demanded a frigate of you, to cruise along our coast, you could not furnish it?"

"It is not frigates that we are in want of," answered I; "but at this moment I should be greatly at a loss to find an officer to command it."

I only mention this circumstance, because of the interpretation which M. de Narbonne afterwards put upon my answer, as will hereafter appear.

It was upon this same occasion that I importuned the *Garde des Sceaux* to take vigorous measures against the judges of Brest; namely, to punish them, or at least dismiss them, if they delayed any longer to render justice to M. de la Jaille. He answered, that in the present circumstances we must use great circumspection and address; because, if we pretended to adhere strictly to the letter of the constitution, we should soon find ourselves gravelled.

"I know nothing of that," said I, "nor will I enter into any discussion on that point; but this I do know perfectly, that we have no right to attempt to modify or



new construe the constitution ; our duty is to endeavour to execute it precisely as it is, because without this we can never make it be fully known and understood by the nation ; and therefore if there really is any gravel in the constitution, the best thing we can do is to make it manifest to the whole nation, that those who have a right may apply the proper remedies, or make the necessary alterations. After each minister has for some time followed this plan in his own department, we may some day go all together to the national assembly, and lay open our conduct before them, informing them of the efforts we have made to execute the constitution literally ; and that notwithstanding our having used all the legal means in our power, we still had found some insurmountable obstacle, from which it would be apparent that the execution of the constitution was impossible in some cases, and in others, that it would be pernicious. Depend upon it," continued I, " the assembly, or at least the nation at large, would thank us for having  
made

made this discovery, and consider us as worthy, upright ministers, and true patriots."

"Yes," rejoined the *Garde des Sceaux*, "but by that means we shall raise against us all the constitutionalists, the Jacobins, the clubs, and we shall have another revolution, worse perhaps than the present one."

"Another revolution we may have," said I; "but one worse than the present is impossible. Of this I am so convinced, that I am determined not to deviate one step from the course that I have mentioned to you."

In the first discourse which I pronounced to the assembly in the end of October 1791, I announced, that I would not begin the execution of the general plan, until all the decrees were passed respecting the particular laws by which my administration was to be regulated. The motive I alleged for this determination was the importance of preventing the confusion and inconveniencies attending an incomplete organization, from creating any prejudice against

against the new regulations. It could not be doubted but that this was the opinion of the assembly, after the applause which was given to this part of my discourse.

I waited with great tranquillity for the above-mentioned decrees, which the committee of marine, solely occupied in finding occasions to blame me, were never thinking of. They seemed to have entirely forgot the necessity of such decrees.

I always kept up the same reserve with the committee, never going there, and avoiding all correspondence with it; and even when I received a letter from thence, which required any necessary information, instead of answering the president of the committee, I addressed my explanation to the president of the assembly, as if I gave it of my own accord, and taking no notice of its being demanded by the committee. Those gentlemen were enraged at this conduct, at the same time they could not complain, as that would have been reproaching me for my too great fidelity to the constitution. They one day  
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sent their president to me, upon an affair which greatly interested them. He made himself be announced by the title of president of the committee of marine.

"I know no such person," said I, aloud to the footman who announced him. "Do you know if the gentleman is a member of the assembly?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, if that be the case, announce him by his name."

This order was punctually obeyed, and rather disconcerted the president, who was near enough to the door to hear what I said.

"You know, sir," said I to him, "that the constitution does not authorize us to have any communication with the committees, consequently you cannot be offended with my precision upon this occasion. You are a member of the assembly; in that quality my house is open to you, and I shall be always ready to attend to whatever you may have to communicate."

"I imagined," said he, "that as your colleagues—"

"My

“ My colleagues,” interrupted I, “ have undoubtedly good reasons for acting as they do, but for my own part, I have none to deviate from the constitution : but I shall be ready to attend to you with the same attention and interest as if you were president of all the committees of the assembly.”

“ I came to speak to you, sir,” said he, “ respecting the various offers which have been made for provisions for the navy. I presume you intend to finish that business.”

“ Not yet. It is much less pressing than many others, because there is already a board of commissioners, to whom that business is entrusted, who execute their duty very well.”

“ I mentioned this,” resumed he, “ only because we are teased at present with offers from various companies, desirous of that undertaking, and whose proposals seem advantageous.”

“ As that regards *me* only,” said I, “ you may easily get rid of their importunity, by sending them to me. With respect to their proposals, when we are ready for determining,

mining, we shall consider which is the most advantageous : but this I am certain of already, that some are of a disgraceful nature, some hints having been given very much resembling bribes : as allowing a considerable share in the profits, without any advance of money, to some of my friends or relations. I mention this, in the full conviction that you highly disapprove of every thing of this kind ; and that if the same insulting proposals had been made to any member of the assembly, they would have been rejected with the same indignation that I have done."

He appeared to me to deserve this compliment, for he really had the countenance of an honest man : but I was far from having the same opinion of all his colleagues, and particularly of the members of the marine committee. I ought, however, to acknowledge, that there were men of probity amongst them, who, without having any personal acquaintance with me, always took my part, and had the candour to convey to  
me

me all the intelligence which they believed could be of any use.

Some time after, I was informed, in the middle of the night, that the account of my conversation with the president had greatly exasperated the majority of the committee against me. They considered my postponing the decision on the various proposals above-mentioned as a proof of unwillingness to execute the constitution, and of an inclination to overturn the present system of the marine department; in consequence of which the committee had hastily agreed on the principal articles of a report, to be laid next day before the assembly, as the foundation of a decree of accusation against me.

I too well knew the dispositions of the assembly, with regard to me, not to apprehend that this report would be agreed upon without my being heard; and the decree of accusation once passed, it would have been difficult to have obtained the revocation. It was therefore more prudent to

prevent the report from being made ; and I gained this point by easy means. I immediately wrote a letter to the president of the assembly, in which I complained bitterly that none of the decrees were passed which I stood in need of, to terminate the formation of the marine department, although I had given a sketch of those decrees in my discourse pronounced last October, and that the assembly had acknowledged the necessity of passing them, before the new regulations of the marine department could be made ; and I expressed myself particularly hurt, as those who were unacquainted with this circumstance would impute the delay given to the measures entirely to my want of diligence.

This letter, which was read in the assembly at the moment when the committee of marine were going to make the report, in order to found the decree of accusation against me, entirely disconcerted the orator and his adherents. Their declamations, and the steps they had taken to insure the majority



majority of votes were rendered thoroughly ridiculous.

They revenged themselves a few days after, by having it decreed, that whereas the reading of letters from the ministers in the assembly occasioned much loss of time, henceforth they should be laid before the committee, which would only give an account of such as were of sufficient consequence to merit the attention of the assembly.

This decree, by which they flattered themselves they should have the power of weakening or suppressing, at pleasure, our means of defence, gave me no uneasiness, because the ministers always retained the right of speaking in the assembly, by which I expected to be able to repel the attacks made against me.

This continual warfare would only have been an amusement to the ministers, if they had not been more scrupulous than their enemies in the means of defence they employed : but the practice peculiar to the Jacobins, of pursuing, without hesitation,

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the most criminal paths, when necessary to gain their end, gave them an advantage which men of principle had no means of resisting.

“ You have nothing to fear from the aristocrates, “ said Mirabeau, one day, to his adherents;” they neither pillage, burn, nor assassinate. What, then, can they do against you? Let them go on with their declamations; their fate is decided.”

Mirabeau was certainly in the right. He might also have added, that men of probity would not permit their worst enemies to be assassinated, even when it could not be imputed to them, to have promoted or countenanced the crime in any way.

This was what the Intendant of Brest experienced on a remarkable occasion, which I cannot pass over in silence. Towards the end of the year 1791, at the time of the armament destined to carry succour to St. Domingo, Redon de Beaupreau, Intendant of Brest, sent me, according to custom, a list of persons, whom he recommended as *commis aux revues* in the expedition.

dition. I was much surprised to find in this list the name of Bellanger, one of the chiefs of the Jacobin club, who had figured in all the insurrections at Brest, and promoted the assassinations. Beaupreau himself, in the notes which he addressed, six months before, to my predecessor, had always represented this Bellanger as a most atrocious character, whom he intended to turn out of his office, as soon as it could be done without danger. I did not hesitate to efface Bellanger's name from the list of *commis aux revues*; and when I announced this to Beaupreau, I took care to let him know that it was the note he sent to my predecessor, of which I gave him the extract, which had determined me.

I had no doubt but that my letter would throw Beaupreau into great embarrassment, but I had no idea that it would expose him to be assassinated; and I was surprised, by a letter I received from M. de Marigni, who commanded the marine at Brest, and who had the goodness to transmit to me the humble and pressing supplications, which

Beaupreau did not dare to send me himself, upon Bellanger's name being effaced from the list.

M. de Marigni informed me, that the life of Beaupreau was in my hands, as Bellanger would cause him to be assassinated, as soon as he was informed of my motive for refusing to appoint him. And although M. de Marigni had been the object of the Intendant's persecution from the commencement of the revolution, he had the generosity to intercede for his enemy, and solicit me to replace the name of Bellanger in the list.

Beaupreau also employed in this mediation M. Pouget, an ancient intendant of marine, of great merit, in whom he knew I had much confidence. The letter which Beaupreau wrote to him upon this occasion was full of protestations of repentance for what he termed past errors, and assurances that he would conduct himself better in future. Far from retracting his word respecting Bellanger, he added, "that he was a monster who deserved to be hanged :

but that he had included him in the list of *commis*, to get rid of him from Brest, where his patriotic frenzy occasioned the greatest disorder, and he was in hopes, that aboard whatever vessel he was employed, his conduct would be such that he would be tossed into the sea."

I should certainly have been excusable in adhering to my first determination of refusing to put him again on the list, however fatal the consequences might have proved to Beaupreau ; and I might also have deprived this intendant of his place, for his prevarication in recommending a person to a confidential employment, whom he had denounced to the minister, a few months before, as a wretch capable of every crime. But as it was impossible, at that period, to appoint a man of probity to his situation at Brest, without exposing him to the greatest danger, I preferred saving the life of Beaupreau, although, in so doing, I risked my responsibility, by approving the appointment of a villain like Bellanger.

## C H A P. XIII.

*Bad success of the last naval promotion.—Resignation of almost all the officers.—The Duke of Orleans accepts the rank of admiral.—Sentiments he expressed to me upon the occasion.—He waits upon the king.—He returns to the palace the Sunday following, and is insulted.—The Count d'Estaing accepts of the rank of admiral, with restrictions.—His ridiculous demands and conduct.—The deputy Rouyer protects him.—Letter of Rouyer to the king.—M. de Peynier, after having accepted the new rank with which he was invested, refuses the command of the marine at Brest, and gives in his resignation,*

THE promotion made by M. Thevenard did not give satisfaction in the navy. I never expected it would. How could it be imagined that brave officers, accustomed to the respect of the sailors, and to have their orders obeyed with submission, should

ever consent to become the instruments of their own degradation? The profession which had been honoured by their talents and their courage had now nothing to offer but dangers without glory, and service without utility, since disobedience and revolt were not only tolerated, but encouraged and regarded as marks of patriotism. Accordingly almost all the officers sent me their resignation, upon the receipt of my letter announcing their promotion. The duke of Orleans and the count d'Estaing were amongst the few exceptions.

The duke of Orleans was not satisfied with writing to me that he had accepted the rank of admiral; he likewise paid me a visit; and, amongst other matters, he assured me, that he set the higher value upon the favour which the king had conferred on him, because it gave him the means of convincing his majesty how much his sentiments had been calumniated. This declaration was made with an air of great openness and sincerity, and accompanied with the warmest protestations of loyalty.

“ I am

"I am very unfortunate," said he, "without deserving to be so. A thousand atrocities have been laid to my charge, of which I am completely innocent. I have been supposed guilty by many, merely because I have disdained to enter into any justification of myself from crimes, of which I have a real horror. You are the first minister to whom I ever said as much, because you are the only one whose character ever inspired me with confidence. You will soon have an opportunity of judging whether my conduct gives the lie to my words."

He pronounced these last words with a voice and manner which convinced me he meant them as an answer to the air of incredulity with which I listened to him. I answered him, that I was so much afraid of weakening the force of his expressions, in reporting them to the king, as he desired I should, that I begged of him to deliver them himself to his majesty. He replied, that it was precisely what he wished; and that if he could flatter himself that the king



would receive him, he would go to the court next day.

I gave his majesty an account, the same evening at the council, of the visit I had received from the duke of Orleans, and all that had passed; adding, that I could not help being convinced of the sincerity of his professions. The king resolved to receive him, and the following day had a conversation with him of more than half an hour, with which his majesty appeared to be well satisfied.

“I am of your opinion,” said he to me, “that he returns to us with sincerity, and that he will do all that depends on him to repair the mischiefs which have been committed in his name, and in which, very possibly, he has not had so great a share as we have suspected.”

The following Sunday the duke of Orleans came to the king's levee, where he met with the most mortifying reception from the courtiers, who were ignorant of what had passed, and from the royalists,  
who

who usually came on that day to pay their court to the royal family. They pressed round him, treading designedly upon his toes, and pushing him towards the door. When he went into the queen's apartment, where the cloth was already laid, as soon as he appeared, they cried out on every side, "let nobody approach the dishes;" insinuating that he might throw poison into them.

The insulting murmurs which his presence excited, forced him to retire without having seen any of the royal family. He was pursued to the top of the stairs; and as he was going down, some spit over the staircase upon him. He hastened out, filled with rage and indignation, and convinced that the king and queen were the authors of these outrages, of which they were not only ignorant, but extremely concerned when they were informed of them. From that moment the duke of Orleans conceived implacable hatred, and vowed vengeance against the king and queen. He kept this oath but too well. I  
happened

happened to be at court that day, and was an eye-witness to the scene I have just related.

Upon the count d'Estaing's appointment to the rank of admiral, he wrote me a letter of eight pages, expressed in such ambiguous terms, that I should not have been able to comprehend it, if M. de Montmorin, whom he solicited to recommend his request to me, had not explained it more clearly. I perceived that he was very well pleased to be admiral, but that he objected to being so upon the same footing with others; and he wished that a new place, under the title of *admiral extraordinary*, should be created for him; asserting, that something of the same kind had been done when he obtained the rank of chief of a squadron. He desired also to have it expressly ascertained, that his rank of admiral was not to be an obstruction to his attaining that of *Marechal de France*. I answered him, that the duke of Orleans being as yet the only admiral, and even the only officer of the marine, who had accepted of the rank with which he was invested, I  
could

could not well propose to the assembly to create a place of admiral extraordinary, until all the ordinary admirals had accepted their commissions. This reason did not satisfy him. He had, he said, very good friends in the assembly, and particularly in the committee of marine, and he was certain, that if I would lay his request before them, it would be granted. I advised him to draw it up in the form of a memorial. I consented even to receive it, and to send it to the assembly, but without adding any observation of my own. I was informed, a few days after, that the principal person on whose influence he relied, in the committee of marine, was precisely that Rouyer, who was the most violent of all my antagonists, and, fortunately for me, the most foolish. The count d'Estaing went almost every day to the house of this man, sometimes waiting two whole hours in his antichamber; and he never addressed him by any other name than "my dear captain," either when he spoke or wrote to him, although he never had served in that rank. This he probably did  
with

with the view of appearing to favour Rouyer's pretensions to the cross of St. Lewis\*.

I was informed of these circumstances by his clerk, who told me, at the same time, that the man's ambition was no longer limited to the cross of St. Lewis, but that he now aspired to the rank of first minister, and intended to make the proposal to the king by a letter, which he was to deliver himself, accompanied by two chevaliers of St. Lewis; and that he had been teasing this same clerk, for a week past, to compose a letter for him; and still insisted on it, in spite of the man's expostulation against such a design.

I was, on the contrary, of opinion, that it would be very advantageous to the king to be in possession of the means of exposing

\* Rouyer took care to make himself named, by the marine committee, "Reporter of M. d'Estaing's demand," and pronounced a very emphatic discourse in his favour, on the 6th of March 1792, to the assembly; in consequence of which it was decreed that M. d'Estaing might act as admiral, without preventing him from obtaining his rank in the army, but on condition that he should receive only the emoluments of the situation which he actually did occupy.

a knave

a knave of this kind ; therefore I advised the clerk not to defer writing the letter any longer, and to make it extravagant and ridiculous, but at the same time in such a stile as would impose upon Rouyer, and prevent him from seeing the end intended. Nothing was easier. The clerk afterwards shewed me a rough sketch of the letter, with which I was, upon the whole, very well pleased. The few alterations I suggested were soon made, and I demanded, as a proof of zeal, which might be useful to the clerk, that he would give me a copy of the letter, as soon as Rouyer had determined to write it. The clerk brought me the copy next day, telling me, at the same time, that Rouyer was so enchanted with the letter, that he already fancied himself first minister ; and that he was now in search of two chevaliers of St. Lewis to accompany him, when he went to present the letter to the king, “ and to warrant, by their presence, that he was capable of *performing all that he had promised to his majesty.*” This sentence, which was at the end of the original

ginal letter, was not inserted in that which was delivered to the king on the 17th of March 1792, and afterwards found in the iron cabinet, because Rouyer was forced to suppress it, after having sought in vain, for the space of two months, for two chevaliers of St. Lewis to accompany him.

Before the king received the letter sent by Rouyer, therefore, he was perfectly acquainted with the contents, by means of the copy that I had shewn him, which had amused him very much.

This performance is so very curious, that I cannot avoid inserting it. Here it is, exactly as it was printed in the king's process, in the third collection, page 104.

*Letter from Rouyer to the King.*

“ Sire,

“ A citizen, invested by the people with the painful and glorious power of giving them laws, and of watching over their happiness, requests your attention upon the present state of the kingdom, and desires to propose

propose to you the means of insuring its glory and felicity. Deeply impressed with the evils which rend my country, I ought also to count up its innumerable resources. I have probed its wounds, and calculated its force. I have compared all, examined all, and I have foreseen all. I can now announce to your majesty, that upon you alone depends the execution of the laws, and consequently the security of the empire. You can, in a word, heal its wounds, dissipate its alarms, and annihilate its perils: you can restore to France that peace which has fled, and that dignity which ought to belong to her. You can restore to the throne that national love which is its only security, and that lustre which is its due.

“Sire, in order to execute this noble design, I only require the direction of the means which the law entrusts with you, and to be empowered to employ the force which the constitution has placed in your hands; and I offer my head in pledge of the sincerity of my promises, the wisdom of my plans, and the certainty of success.

Do



Do not imagine, fire, that zeal for public good has disturbed my imagination, or that the illusions of self-love make me overrate my own powers: I am sure of performing *successfully* what I undertake *boldly*. Permit me to enjoy the consoling hope of restoring your happiness (for your's depends upon that of the state). I know that numerous obstacles oppose the exertion of public power, and combat, without ceasing, the benefits of the law. I see every where sedition in action, and authority hiding its head: anarchy elevating itself, and a government which dares not suppress it. Your ministers, fire, present this fatal picture too often to your view: they tell you of the troubles, without explaining the causes of them; and if they ever conceived the idea of terminating them, they have always been deterred by weak obstacles or exaggerated dangers. But I know these dangers, and I set them at defiance. Weakness can only calculate them, but genius overcomes them; leaving it to history to describe the dangers after they are annihilated.

“ This,

“This, sire, is the glorious labour to which I invite you, offering you, at the same time, the tribute of my courage, of my moral and physical powers, and of my profound respect. Receive the homage of a citizen, who perhaps may have been falsely represented to you as a man of an ardent character, an enemy to order and royalty, but whose actions shall every where proclaim, that nature and honour have engraven on his soul the love of his country and of his king.

“Sire, I still repeat to your majesty, that I engage to re-establish, in two months, the royal authority, peace within the kingdom, consideration without, and public felicity, if you condescend to adopt the council which my zeal shall dictate to you. I desire not pomp, nor honours, nor any reward but the glory of saving my country. You can greatly contribute to it; and I would willingly think that you only require to be informed of the means. I shall discover them to your majesty: I shall reveal what your ministers conceal from you, or inform you

of what they are ignorant. You yourself shall behold the state of your empire ; you shall appreciate the men whom the law permits you to command ; you shall hear those whom the people distinguish by their confidence ; and if you observe the conduct which I shall point out, you will find the suspicions and alarms, which have been sowed around you, dissipated by the love and respect of all Frenchmen. You will find the power which the constitution gives you increased by opinion, supported by esteem, firmly established by the confidence of all the citizens ; and the queen, partaking with your majesty in the fruits of general happiness, will then feel, that the only pure felicity is that which arises from benevolence and virtue. But this plan cannot be executed, unless your majesty is animated with the sincere desire of preserving together, in all its parts, the constitution of the state. And if, in spite of the outcry of fanatical priests, the threats of emigrants, and the conduct of foreign princes, you are not absolutely convinced of the necessity of braving this insignificant league

league which is forming against us, I shall be much surpris'd ; because, for my own part, sire, I am so well convinced of our own force and resources, that when I cast my eyes upon the enemies that menace us, they excite no other sentiment than that of pity.

“ Raised to the elevation of liberty and equality, those colossal divinities who trample under foot all intrigues and all passions, I extend my view over the courts of Europe, and I am certain of having it in my power to force them to a peace.

“ Yes, sire, you may avoid a foreign war, or at least restore internal peace, by the success of our arms : you may render your authority more revered, more august, more extensive : you may become the tutelary god of the French nation. Through you, religion will triumph over the indecent dissensions which exist between the refractory and the constitutional priests : through you, reason and justice shall at last penetrate the souls of aristocrats, and you will bring them back to the bosom of their country,

disarmed by remorse. I shall silently enjoy the fruits of my advice, and of your strength of mind. Happy in the general happiness, I shall direct the public gratitude to you alone, and my heart shall be satisfied. The ambitious, who wish to elevate the edifice of their own fortune upon the wreck of monarchy; the hot-headed and extravagant, who imagine that liberty can only be established upon broken sceptres; all parties, all cabals shall bend before the throne raised upon the basis of the constitution. Popular assemblies, whose rise you were made to fear without foundation, shall then meet only to offer you their thanks and praise.

“ This, sire, is a faithful representation of the change which you have it in your power to operate, by the means which I have unfolded. Distrust ought not to find a place in your heart, and make you reject a faithful subject. Were I in the same perplexing circumstances on the throne, where birth and the law has placed you, and if the same support were offered me, no inward prejudice,

prejudice, nor malicious suggestion from without, no consideration whatever, should influence me to reject it.

“ I attend your majesty’s decision with respectful confidence. My conduct and my letter demand an examination. Let it be as severe as reason, and as impartial as justice. But if it does not procure an answer, as I think that the fate of the state depends upon it, permit me to summon, in this extraordinary cause, those whose dearest interest it includes, and submit my letter to the judgment of the French nation.

(Signed) ROUYER, *Citoyen.*”

Paris, March 17, 1792.

A spirit of insubordination and revolt had manifested itself in all the principal sea-ports, and on board many vessels of war, ever since the year 1789. Many officers had suffered outrage and personal insult from the sailors; so that the naval commanders in general were disgusted with the service; and I really imagined, that the duke of Orleans and the count d’Estaing

x 3

would

would have been the only officers of high rank willing to serve, while the navy was subjected to the new regulations. I was therefore greatly surprised when I received a letter from M. de Peynier, an officer of merit, who had formerly been *chef d'escadre*, informing me that he accepted, with all possible gratitude, of the new rank to which the king had promoted him. Some of this gentleman's friends, however, were persuaded that his acceptance of employment in the present circumstances was entirely owing to his having lived, for a long time, at a remote castle which belonged to him in the mountains of Bigorre, and to his being quite ignorant of the present state of the navy. They wished, therefore, that I should keep his acceptance secret, until that was laid open to him. But as at this time I was accused of retarding the nomination to employments in my department, on purpose to spread the opinion that it would be impossible to fit out a fleet, or maintain a navy, according to the present establishment, I did not choose to let this opportunity

nity slip of proving the falsehood of such an opinion ; for which reason I informed the council, that very day, of the letter I had received from M. de Peynier ; and after having mentioned him to the king with the praise he merited, I proposed that he should be promoted to the immediate command at Brest, instead of M. de la Grandiere, who had refused it. This proposal was approved of by the whole council, but had no other effect than to justify me, in the eyes of the public, from the calumny above-mentioned ; for M. de Peynier having, no doubt, been informed of the actual state of the navy, in the interval between his writing to me and receiving the letter from the king, not only refused the command at Brest, but also retracted his acceptation of the place appointed for him in the late promotion.

In other circumstances, this conduct of M. de Peynier would have been very censurable : but how can we blame officers, who have often shewn their courage and zeal for the service of their king and country, for refusing to expose themselves use-

Y 4

lessly



lessly to the danger of being insulted, and even assassinated, by those very sailors, whose duty it was to respect and obey them? Convinced as I was, and am still, that the chief force of the French navy consists in the talents of the officers, I thought it my duty to pay all possible attention to their personal safety; and being likewise persuaded that many of the officers would have given in their resignation, if their attendance had been rigorously insisted on, at a time when there was not an absolute necessity for it, and when the sailors were in a state of mutiny, I wished to use every means to quiet the minds of the latter in the first place. I am still persuaded that, so far from being contrary to the oath I had sworn to be faithful to the constitution, this conduct was the only one I could adopt, conformable to the interest of the state, and, of course, to true patriotism.

## C H A P. XIV.

*Motives of the resolution which I took of writing down the discourses I pronounced in the assembly.—A discourse which I pronounced upon the state of the colony of St. Domingo.—Effect which it produced.*

THE incorrect manner in which a sentence, which I had pronounced at the famous sitting of the 10th of October, had been reported, and the denunciation to which I had been exposed, by publishing an explanation of that mistake, made me resolve to put into writing every discourse that I should afterwards make in the assembly, and to read it there from the manuscript. By adhering strictly to this resolution, I have suffered less than otherwise I might, from the extreme malevolence which prevailed against me. It happened to me, one day, that I went to the assembly with a discourse which had employed me part of

the night, and which I had but just finished ; so that I had not time to write it out fair, and read it from the first sketch. It related to the disasters of St. Domingo. When I had pronounced it, the assembly decreed its being printed, and ordered me to leave it. I answered, that I could not, because it was only a first sketch, and so blotted, that nobody except myself could make it out ; but that I would send a copy next day to the committee. One of the secretaries observed, that a copy might be made out directly by a clerk, and that it might be next day returned to me. I persisted in my refusal, in spite of the murmurs of the assembly ; giving, as an additional reason, that the king had not yet seen this discourse, and that it was my duty to shew it to him as soon as possible ; but that if they feared my making any alterations, they might mark the erasures and references. After having said this, and shewn my blotted minutes to the secretary, who had come from his place to take them from me, I put it into my pocket very  
deli-

deliberately, and then rose up to withdraw. A general murmur and noise immediately took place in the assembly.

"The minister does not leave his discourse," cried one.

"He has put it in his pocket," said another.

"He is carrying it away," exclaimed a third.

"Yes, unquestionably, I am carrying it away," said I, with firmness, turning to those who were exclaiming, "but it is with no design to suppress it."

The cry ceased, and I went out.

This discourse is connected with events of too important a nature to be omitted ; I have therefore thought it absolutely necessary to insert it at large, as follows :

"Gentlemen, I formerly gave you an account of the measures taken by his majesty for sending succours to the inhabitants of St. Domingo, as soon as their calamities and dangers were known : these succours, insufficient of themselves, depended for success upon their celerity only, and upon  
their

their being followed with far more important aids. But before this could be determined upon it was necessary to know exactly the true causes of the disturbances which had brought about this great catastrophe. I have neglected nothing to discover them, because this discovery can alone direct the measures calculated to prevent their recurrence. Some accuse the proprietors of intending to betray the island to the English ; ‘ and,’ they add, ‘ that since the feudal system is abolished in France, the planters justly tremble for the destruction of the more barbarous tyranny which exists in the colonies : they foresee that the classic land of liberty and equality will countenance slavery no where ; therefore they wish to break asunder all ties with it.’ They quote in support of this, the inconsiderate steps of some individuals, and some speeches made in moments of rage, by men, whose passions being ardent from living under a burning sun, they are the more easily exasperated by the slightest contradiction, to which they have been entirely unaccustomed.

“ Others,

“ Others, on the contrary, imagine that the causes of the evils are incendiary publications, which are dispersed throughout the colonies with the design of exciting the negroes to revolt, and the correspondences which have for a long time been kept up between the mulattoes and a society of pretended philanthropists, whose system, they assert, is destructive of all colonial property. It may, indeed, be easily conceived, that ever since the first establishment of our colonies in the West Indies, a people of a humane and liberal way of thinking, and who always deserved to be free, have regretted that the advantages resulting from those establishments depended on the slavery of a large portion of their fellow-creatures. This feeling of a generous nation, which does them the more honour, that it springs spontaneously in their breast without reflection, and which is even estimable when it exceeds the bounds of prudence, must influence all Frenchmen ; and a milder and more humane treatment of the negroes has been the consequence.

“ The

“The result of a sentiment so natural and wise stopped here: but the spirit of philosophy, which in France was more ambitious, determined to extend its conquests. It maintained, with all its powers of reasoning, the theory of a sentiment which it was perhaps enough to have felt. According to this system, the colonies, these possessions, for which principles were disregarded, and humanity shed tears, were not acquisitions so important as avarice believed, but, on the contrary, were ruinous to the state which had the misfortune to possess them. It was thought possible to replace them by possessions nearer at hand, in a climate of the same temperature, such as Africa or the islands in the Mediterranean. The day must come, when it will be necessary to abandon these distant colonies, inhabited by planters, whose ingratitude and infidelity are already apparent. These united considerations made a voluntary abandoning of these islands seem only an anticipation of an event which is inevitable.

“Our

“ Our wiser neighbours made similar calculations relative to their colonies in North America, and demonstrated, by the sums expended in maintaining them, that they were burdensome : but these wise reflections only occurred after their colonies were lost. Besides, the colonies in question were continental, and had no resemblance, except in their name, to the colonies of the American Archipelago. This difference did not strike every mind; and when the interests of commerce appeared to favour the interests of humanity, the number of philanthropists was augmented by the addition of many, whose sensibility could only be excited by motives very different from those of philanthropy.

“ The proprietors of West India estates assert, that the sanguinary scenes, of which they are the victims, originate in the errors and sophistry of the pretended philanthropists. ‘ Follow,’ say they, ‘ with attention the effects of that zeal which first proposed the total abolition of slavery, and the complete freedom of the negroes, and afterwards,



wards, under the pretence of moderation, but in fact to hasten their schemes, only insisted upon the suppression of the *slave trade*; and lastly, by a more artful and skilful manœuvre, appeared to have confined the plan to changing the fate of the mulattoes, in order to ruin us with more certainty. Is it possible to conceive that a system, founded upon humanity, could produce such cruel effects? Does not the history of these countries furnish us with an anecdote, which, by analogy and by comparison, would honour the most delicate philanthopists? Was it not owing to the humane and pious Las Casas, that America was filled with negroes? Was it not this virtuous Spaniard, who, melted by the misery which his countrymen heaped upon the natives, in compelling them to hard labour, flew to Africa to seek men who, already devoted to slavery, might perform the tasks without any aggravation of their misery, and with only a change of their masters; and in a climate similar to their own, might replace the feeble Americans, who,  
unfit

unfit for fatigue, sunk under their labour and their chains? Although this pious missionary repented of the means which his mistaken humanity suggested, it nevertheless is true, that in order to save a few Charibs who survived so much wretchedness, he devoted millions of individuals to slavery, by the avarice which the immense market for slaves excited in Africa. Let us suppose that the modern philanthropists are actuated by as pure motives, yet it would be no less true, that by attempting to abolish the slavery of the blacks, they would reduce to misery and despair five or six millions of whites, who are their fellow-citizens, their friends, and their brothers, and would overthrow one of the strongest pillars of the power of the nation. It would be no less true, that they would not even effect the happiness of those whom they wish to serve; for, in order to accomplish this, it would be necessary to have the concurrence of all those states who possess colonies; and that the abolition of slavery should be the simultaneous decree of all the

powers who are interested: and without this universal agreement, both in will and deed, which is supposed so easy to obtain, the colonies would gain nothing but the choice of a protector, and the slaves the change of a master. The slaves may again succeed, as has been the case already in many places, in murdering us, our families, and all whom they consider as their masters, but the effect will be merely to procure them new masters, much more cruel than us; for in this vessel, in this kind of immense galley, which fate has placed in the Atlantic ocean, and to the benches of which mistaken philanthropy leads the Africans, chaining them to the oars, the most successful insurrections of the crew would only tend to embitter their lot.'

"Such, gentlemen, are the attacks and defences which are employed by the planters and their antagonists. It is with a view to procure light to myself as a minister that I have examined what the real causes were which excited the commotions of St. Domingo, in order to employ the most effectual

fectual means of quieting them, and preventing their return.

“ With regard to the accusation against the proprietors, of intending to give themselves up to the English or to the Americans, I know nothing, and I have seen nothing to make me suspect so criminal a design. Besides, how was this to be effected, by exciting the negroes to insurrection, by impelling them to ravage the whole country? In offering themselves to a new sovereign, why would they choose to present only a heap of ashes and ruins? With regard to the project of their claiming independence, there is no fact to prove that they had so extravagant a project. Their situation, their weakness, and their very nature announce, that to them dependence is a duty, and absolutely necessary. They have even been accused of intending to bring about a counter-revolution. Surely those who cannot credit the possibility of effecting a counter-revolution in France, must consider the attempting it, at the distance of 1800 leagues from the mother  
Z 2 country,

country, as decidedly impossible. It would excite ridicule, if the spectacle of so much misery could permit the mind to receive any other impression but that of grief.

“ With regard to the accusation pointed against the partizans of the freedom of the negroes, I cannot dissemble having discovered that this is far better founded. But whatever is the cause of these disasters, by what means can they be repaired, and how can their return be prevented ?

“ What is most useful for us is certainly a knowledge of our true interests, and of our commercial intercourse with the colonies, as ignorance on these points has been the chief source of our errors and our calamities. Our sugar colonies should be considered as so many manufactures, established at the distance of eighteen hundred leagues from the mother country, and the mother country as a company of capitalists, who have defrayed the expences of these establishments of agriculture and industry, by originally founding them, by maintaining them, and by protecting them. Every indi-

individual in the mother country is a party in this important speculation. To share its benefits, it is only requisite to be born in France. All French citizens, yes, I say all of them, are interested in its prosperity, although under different titles. Some as cultivators or proprietors of land. This class labour the ground, partly to furnish necessities for these distant consumers, and would be ruined without this important market for their crops. Others, being skilled in some ingenious art, which is exercised for the fabrication of goods for the colonies, which, without them, could never be sold. Others, as merchants, navigators, and coasting traders, &c. form a third class, who are employed in transporting the goods of the two first. Whatever situation an individual in this company occupies, whatever money or talent he brings to it, from the industrious labourer to the idle capitalist, from the ingenious manufacturer to the crafty jobber, from the bold speculator to the timid annuitant, all are interested in these valuable possessions: even the calum-

niator himself spreads his libels there with profit.

“ In whatever manner these colonies are governed or managed, they preserve always their original character of an undertaking founded by the mother country, which alone is to receive the benefits or suffer the losses. Even at the time when government, unwisely, if you please, granted the advantage of the exclusive trade of these colonies to certain companies, it only yielded to particular persons the rights of all ; but upon conditions which ought to have been beneficial to all. It was a mine which was farmed by the state, instead of being wrought by it. Perhaps, by this plan, the profits of the great company were diminished in favour of the small ones. I only mention this, to shew that even in these monopolies the whole nation were interested in the produce of the colonies.

“ The expence which these establishments have cost is certainly great ; but how can we appreciate, by gold, or by numbers, the advantages which Europeans reap from their  
their

their colonies? Is this not seen in the evident increase of population, the only certain sign of public prosperity; a sign which infallibly demonstrates, at once, abundance of materials, and the necessity for more hands? (for men always increase where provisions abound, and where there is a call for labour.) Is it not evident, that the necessity of selling the produce to the mother country, and purchasing all that is wanted from it, is a source of incalculable wealth? If the colonies were considered as provinces belonging to the empire, or as allied states, this double monopoly must appear both oppressive and unjust, as the commerce would be the most disadvantageous, and the exchange the most unequal, that was ever proposed between two parts of the same empire, or between two different empires. In fact, the colonies are compelled to purchase all that they consume from us, which monopoly enables us to sell to them what they stand in need of at a very high price; and as they are likewise compelled to sell to us alone their produce, this enables us to



procure, at a very moderate rate, not only what is wanted for the consumption of five-and-twenty millions of people, but likewise an immense overplus, which is sold, for our benefit, to those nations who have no colonies. Can all these advantages be calculated by a series of figures, which, only expressing quantities, cannot be applied but to inanimate objects, which are susceptible of addition and subtraction? The truths discovered by this means are more certain, in proportion as the subject is independent of others, abstracted, and considered only with relation to quantity. But when numbers are applied, to calculate, with exactness, national prosperity, when they are applied to government, and to whatever unites men in society; they produce the most absurd conclusions. This explains to us, besides, how the most exact sciences, when they venture out of the circle of subjects to which they are applicable, become, in the hands of the ambitious, the most treacherous guides, bewildering instead of illuminating the mind.

I beg,

“ I beg, gentlemen, that you will reflect, that the tendency of those errors is not simply to retard the wheel of national fortune, but to force it into retrograde movement. Such would be the natural effect of condemning into inactivity the millions of hands which are now employed in pushing it forward. How calamitous would be the consequence of cutting, at once, so many of the cords as are thus stretched in drawing riches to the nation !

“ When the nature of the colonies is properly considered, the necessity becomes apparent of establishing there a different kind of government from that which is adapted either to the whole of France, or to any one of its departments ; and this example ought not to be regarded as an exception from the other. You see, now, what degree of wisdom was displayed by the constituent assembly, in leaving to your decision the admission or refusal of the representatives of the colonies, who should be considered as the representatives of a corporation or manufacture ! Every thing is explained

explained by examining them in this light : but if they are looked upon only as one of the ordinary portions of the empire, the immense sums which are gained by means of the monopoly must appear unjust and burdensome. The right of exacting this wealth is founded upon our having incurred the original expence, and upon the interest which is due for it. Thus, in spite of the monopoly, our colonists become richer in proportion to the quantity of their produce sold to us ; and thus the gradual augmentation of their commerce increasing, their need of our goods, their prosperity, and that of their mother country, go hand in hand.

“ This reciprocity of exchange and of riches, so advantageous to France, makes it a duty incumbent upon us, at this moment, to repair the disaster which has befallen one of our richest establishments. The total loss sustained by St. Domingo is estimated at the sum of five or six hundred millions, the produce of which would have annually loaded one hundred and fifty ships of five hundred tons each. But this wound, however

ever deep, will be healed by the fecundity of the soil, and by the industrious activity of the inhabitants, if proper assistance be granted them, under the title of loans; if commerce, enlightened as to her interests, which are likewise the general interests of the state, yields to the pressure of circumstances; if she gives time to her ruined creditors; if she wisely suspends her profits, in order to render them more certain and durable; and this is generously engaged to be done, in the numerous addresses which the merchants have presented to the king; and I have no fear in pledging myself for the exact performance of this engagement.

“ The assistance the best adapted to the circumstances of the colonies, and which will most speedily relieve their wants, is giving up to them all that is owing to us by the United States of America. This mode of relief will at once accommodate the Americans and our planters. The first can, upon reasonable terms, furnish to the distressed planters those things

things which are most urgently wanted, such as wood, provisions, draught horses, domestic animals, and frames of houses, which, fashioned in the forests of North America, may be put together in an instant, and will replace, at a small expence, the stone buildings which have been burnt or destroyed.

“ To what more useful purpose can those sums be destined, which a generous nation advanced to procure the independence of its allies, and which it feels already repaid with usury, by the pleasure of seeing their present independence? What fight can be more delightful to true philosophy, than to see the first wealth acquired by liberty, repairing the evils occasioned by licentiousness?

“ It is of great moment, and his majesty will readily consent, as it is agreeable to the constitution, that it should be left entirely to the colony to regulate the distribution and partition of this grant to those who have suffered by fire and pillage; and likewise

wife to levy a suitable contribution upon those whose possessions have been untouched.

“ Measures for future security form the second and most important class of succours.

“ The colonies, these sources of prosperity, were hardly known in Europe, when every state attempted to procure for themselves their exclusive possession. Every fortification placed there was planned by this jealous spirit : they were formed on the coasts, to oppose invasions from without. Why should they fortify the interior of the colony against enemies whom they never expected ? But melancholy experience convinces us that these are the most to be dreaded. This must necessarily occasion some change in the system of fortifications, which, besides, were insufficient, and require to be aided by more powerful means. These fortifications, ranged from distance to distance along the coast, terrifying only in appearance, as they are easily avoided by the enemy, may be supported by a number of  
little

little redoubts, placed more interiorly, to prevent, in case of an insurrection, the communication by the mountains. These posts, without being dangerous to liberty, will suppress licentiousness.

“ The next consideration is, the establishment of colonial fusileers, better organized than the old militia of St. Domingo, and composed entirely of proprietors; the whole of whom, according to the example of the national guards, should be ready to march at the first signal, and a part only should perform regular active service. Secondly, Police laws are wanted to be executed with prudence and firmness, comprehending men of all classes and colours. Thirdly, A complete code of laws, to excite confidence in all towards the colonial proprietors, who are born the administrators of these establishments; and at the same time to give the protection which is due to the men who cultivate the ground, preserve them from being treated with capricious, excessive, or useless rigour, and which would prevent or punish insurrections, as well as those

those abuses of authority which occasion them. Fourthly, New regulations are required relative to the slave trade, to prevent its various abuses, that those sorrowful and unhappy victims of our political interests may not be rendered also the victims of the cruelty of individuals; and obliged to groan, not only under those evils which are become necessary to prevent greater, but likewise under the cruelties of sordid œconomy or avarice.

“Such are the measures which the king charges me to propose to you, and which you, with wisdom, will deliberate upon. Let us do homage to true philanthropy. It is only by its abuses, and by false applications, that those fatal effects, of which it is accused, can take place. It was owing to the moving solicitations and perseverance of some friends of humanity in England that two bills, relative to the slave trade, were carried in parliament. They ameliorate the fate of the negroes, they limit the number which each slave ship is to contain, and command that which even a more enlight-  
 6 ened



ened avarice might have prompted. A people, whose natural sensibility is superior to such laws, will undoubtedly strive to surpass them, by instituting milder and more humane ones. If, in addition to the measures I have proposed, you likewise send a body of troops to guard the different fortified posts, perhaps you will find it useful never to leave the same corps longer than two or three years, on account of the climate, which a long residence renders fatal, and whose influence tends to relax military discipline. Perhaps, likewise, the danger of sending a great part of the army across the seas, every three years in succession, will induce you to adopt other measures which circumstances may suggest.

“ With regard to external defences, the fortifications which are best adapted to the colonies are squadrons of ships constantly stationed there, and a number of vessels perpetually cruising. These are the citadels which ought to be employed, and they will have the good effect of training seamen and officers to man our fleets, and to  
make

make the national flag respected in every quarter of the globe.

“ If, in the middle of such important interests, I am permitted, gentlemen, to mention my own zeal, I would renew the assurances I formerly gave, that none of the obstacles which are thrown in my way will diminish it. The business of administration, perhaps the most important, but certainly the most complicated, will undoubtedly fill up every moment of my time. Observe, gentlemen, that my office participates in the business of all the other branches of administration, besides having business peculiarly of its own. It comprehends men of all nations, of all colours, and with every kind of prejudice; military men of all descriptions; it requires the greatest responsibility; exacts upon every subject the most active and perpetual vigilance. Consider, then, if it be possible, that the man who is occupied with so immense a charge can hope to execute it, if he be diverted from such important concerns by perpetual accusations of so contemptible a nature, as to bring disgrace

upon the useful measure of impeachment.

“ But do not imagine, gentlemen, that I mean, by this, to turn your attention from that particular one which is pointed at me ; I wish only to warn your wisdom against those general ones, directed against all the king’s ministers, and which we have the more reason to expect, because our determined exactitude in executing the new laws, and in reforming the abuses, will excite against us all the persons who lived by those abuses, and who must suffer by their reform. You will easily conceive that our present calumniators would become our greatest applauders, if less occupied with public than with private concerns, we were capable of sacrificing our principles, and did not esteem the approbation of our own consciences, and the good of the country, as the best recompence of upright ministers \*.”

This conclusion being more adapted to the capacity of the audience in the tribune,

\* *Vide* the Appendix, No. IV.

than

than the important discussion which was the subject of my discourse, gained me great applause. This testimony of approbation was absolutely necessary for every minister, while he spoke to the assembly, not only to procure him attention, but likewise to prevent him from being hissed and insulted when he went out of the assembly. I did not, therefore, think it beneath me to take every method of insuring this sort of protection. I was particularly successful on Thursday the 19th of January, when I went, accompanied by all the ministers, to refute the first report which the marine committee made against me, in which I was accused of an intention to subvert the constitution. The sentence which I pronounced in answer to this accusation was more particularly attended to than the other parts of my discourse, and was generally applauded in the tribunes.

“ I am accused,” said I, “ of being an enemy to the constitution. I openly declare that my firm opinion is, that the safety of France depends on its being adhered to.

And I must add, that it is not those who express the greatest enthusiasm for the constitution who observe it most rigidly. It is only by our actions that we can prove our fidelity; and I defy my accusers to point out a single act of my administration which is not conformable to this constitution\*."

Such was really my opinion at that period, and such was the constant principle of my conduct during my ministry. And I still believe, that if this opinion had been more general, the revolution would have had no other consequences than the reformation of all those abuses which were its first object.

\* See the Journals of that period, and particularly the Mercury of the 28th of January 1792.

# A P P E N D I X.

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## No. I.

*Séance Royale du Mardi 23 Juin 1789.*

### *Discours du Roi.*

“ Messieurs,  
“ JE croyois avoir fait tout ce qui étoit  
en mon pouvoir pour le bien de mes  
peuples, lorsque j’avois pris la résolution de  
vous rassembler ; lorsque j’avois surmonté  
toutes les difficultés dont votre convocation  
étoit entourée ; lorsque j’étois allé, pour ainsi  
dire, au-devant des vœux de la nation, en  
manifestant à l’avance ce que je voulois faire  
pour son bonheur.

“ Il sembloit que vous n’aviez qu’à finir  
mon ouvrage, et la nation attendoit avec  
impatience le moment où, par le concours  
des vues bienfaisantes de son souverain, et du  
zèle éclairé de ses représentants, elle alloit  
jouir des prospérités que cette union devoit  
leur procurer.

“ Les états généraux sont ouverts depuis près des deux mois, et ils n'ont point pu encore s'entendre sur les préliminaires de leurs opérations. Une parfaite intelligence auroit dû naître du seul amour de la patrie, et une funeste division jette l'alarme dans tous les esprits. Je veux le croire, et j'aime à le penser, les Français ne sont pas changés. Mais, pour éviter de faire à aucun de vous des reproches, je considère que le renouvellement des états généraux, après un si long terme, l'agitation qui l'a précédé, le but de cette convocation, si différent de celui qui rassembloit vos ancêtres, les restrictions dans les pouvoirs, et plusieurs autres circonstances, ont dû nécessairement amener des oppositions, des débats, et des prétensions exagérées.

“ Je dois au bien commun de mon royaume, je me dois à moi-même de faire cesser ces funestes divisions. C'est dans cette résolution, messieurs, que je vous rassemble de nouveau autour de moi ; c'est comme le père commun de tous mes sujets, c'est comme le défenseur des loix de mon royaume,

aume, que je viens en retracer le véritable esprit, et réprimer les atteintes qui ont pu y être portées.

“ Mais, messieurs, après avoir établi clairement les droits respectifs des différens ordres, j’attends du zèle pour la patrie, des deux premiers ordres, j’attends de leur attachement pour ma personne, j’attends de la connoissance qu’ils ont des maux urgens de l’état, que dans les affaires qui regardent le bien général, ils seront les premiers à proposer une réunion d’avis et de sentimens, que je regarde comme nécessaire dans la crise actuelle, qui doit opérer de salut de l’état.”

Un des secrétaires d’état a lû ensuite la déclaration suivante :

*Déclaration du Roi, concernant la présente  
terme des Etats Généraux\*.*

# ART. I.

*“ Le roi veut que l’ancienne distinction des  
trois ordres de l’état soit conservée en son en-*

\* Cette déclaration étoit conforme au vœu de la nation exprimé dans la majorité des cayers, et les deux articles, qui sont en lettres italiques, sont les seuls qui n’ayent pas été proposés par M. Necker.



*tier, comme essentiellement liée à la constitution de son royaume ; que les députés librement élus par chacun des trois ordres, formant trois chambres, délibérant par ordre, et pouvant, avec l'approbation du souverain convenir de délibérer en commun, puissent seuls être considérés comme formant le corps des représentants de la nation. En conséquence la roi a déclaré nulles les délibérations prises par les députés de l'ordre du tiers état, le 17 de ce mois, ainsi que celles qui auroient pu s'ensuivre, comme illégales et inconstitutionnelles.*

## ART. II.

“ Sa majesté déclare valides tous les pouvoirs vérifiés ou à vérifier dans chaque chambre, sur lesquels il ne s'est point élevé ou ne s'élèvera point de contestation : ordonne sa majesté qu'il en sera donné communication respective entre les ordres.

“ Quant aux pouvoirs qui pourroient être contestés dans chaque ordre, et sur lesquels les parties intéressées se pourvoiroient, il y sera statué, pour la présente tenue des états généraux seulement, ainsi qu'il sera ci-après ordonné.

ART.

## ART. III.

“ Le roi casse et annule, comme anti-constitutionnelles, contraires aux lettres de convocation, et opposées à l'intérêt de l'état, les restrictions des pouvoirs, qui, en gênant la liberté des députés aux états généraux, les empêcheroient d'adopter les formes de délibération prises séparément par ordre ou en commun, par le vœu distinct des trois ordres.

## ART. IV.

“ Si, contre l'intention du roi, quelques uns des députés avoient fait le serment téméraire de ne point s'écarter d'une forme de délibération quelconque, sa majesté laisse à leur conscience de considérer si les dispositions quelle va régler, s'écartent de la lettre ou de l'esprit de l'engagement qu'ils auroient pris.

## ART. V.

“ Le roi permet aux députés qui se croiront gênés par leurs mandats, de demander à leurs commettans un nouveau pouvoir :

pouvoir : mais sa majesté leur enjoint de rester en attendant aux états généraux, pour assister à toutes les délibérations sur les affaires pressantes de l'état, et y donner un avis consultatif.

## ART. VI.

“ Sa majesté déclare que dans les tenues suivantes d'états généraux, elle ne souffrira pas que les cahiers ou les mandats puissent être jamais considérés comme impératifs ; ils ne doivent être que de simples instructions confiées à la conscience et à la libre opinion des députés dont on aura fait choix.

## ART. VII.

“ Sa majesté ayant exhorté, pour le salut de l'état, les trois ordres à se réunir pendant cette tenue d'états seulement, *pour délibérer en commun sur les affaires, d'une utilité générale*, veut faire connoître ses intentions sur la manière dont il pourra y être procédé.

## ART. VIII.

“ Seront nommément exceptées des affaires qui pourront être traitées en commun, celles

celles qui regardent les droits antiques et constitutionnels des trois ordres, la forme de constitution à donner aux prochains états généraux les propriétés féodales et seigneuriales, les droits utiles et les prérogatives honorifiques des deux premiers ordres.

## ART. IX.

“ Le consentement particulier du clergé sera nécessaire pour toutes les dispositions qui pourroient intéresser la religion, la discipline ecclésiastique, le régime des ordres, et corps séculiers et réguliers.

## ART. X.

“ Les délibérations à prendre par les trois ordres réunis, sur les pouvoirs contestés, et sur lesquels les parties intéressées se pourvoiroient aux états généraux, seront prises à la pluralité des suffrages ; mais si les deux tiers des voix, dans l'un des trois ordres, réclamoient encore la délibération de l'assemblée, l'affaire sera rapportée au roi, pour y être définitivement statué par sa majesté.

ART.

## ART. XI.

“ Si dans la vue de faciliter la réunion des trois ordres, ils desiroient que les délibérations qu’ils auront à prendre en commun, passassent seulement à la pluralité des deux tiers des voix, sa majesté est disposée à autoriser cette forme.

## ART. XII.

“ Les affaires qui auront été décidées dans les assemblées des trois ordres réunis seront remises le lendemain en délibération, si cent membres de l’assemblée se réunissent pour en faire la demande.

## ART. XIII.

“ Le roi desire que dans cette circonstance, et pour ramener les esprits à la conciliation, les trois chambres commencent à nommer séparément une commission composée du nombre de députés qu’elles jugeront convenable, pour préparer la forme et la distribution des bureaux de conférences qui devront traiter les différentes affaires.

ART.

## ART. XIV.

“ L’assemblée générale des députés des trois ordres sera présidée par les présidens choisis par chacun des ordres, et selon leur rang ordinaire.

## ART. XV.

“ Le bon ordre, la décence, et la liberté même des suffrages, exigent que sa majesté défende, comme elle le fait expressement, qu’aucune personne, autre que les membres des trois ordres composant les états généraux, puissent assister à leurs délibérations, soit qu’ils les prennent en commun ou séparément.”

Le roi a pris la parole et a dit :

“ J’ai voulu aussi, messieurs, vous faire remettre sous les yeux les différens bienfaits que j’accorde à mes peuples. Ce n’est pas pour circonscrire votre zèle dans le cercle que je vais tracer ; car j’adopterai avec plaisir toute autre vue de bien public qui sera proposée par les états généraux. Je puis dire, sans me faire illusion, que jamais roi  
I n’en

n'en a autant fait pour aucune nation : mais quelle autre peut l'avoir mieux mérité par ses sentimens, que la nation Française ! Je ne craindrai pas de l'exprimer : ceux qui par des prétentions exagérées, ou par des difficultés hors de propos, retarderoient encore l'effet de mes intentions paternelles, se rendroient indignes d'être regardés comme Français."

Ce discours a été suivi de la lecture de la déclaration que voici :

*Déclaration des intentions du Roi.*

ART. I.

"Aucun nouvel impôt ne sera établi, aucun ancien ne sera prorogé au-delà du terme fixé par les loix, sans le consentement des représentans de la nation.

ART. II.

"Les impositions nouvelles qui seront établies, ou les anciennes qui seront prorogées, ne le seront que pour l'intervalle qui devra s'écouler jusqu'à l'époque de la tenue suivante des états généraux.

## ART. III.

“ Les emprunts pouvant devenir l'occasion nécessaire d'un accroissement d'impôts, aucun n'aura lieu sans le consentement des états généraux, sous la condition toutefois, qu'en cas de guerre, ou d'autre danger national, le souverain aura la faculté d'emprunter sans délai, jusqu'à la concurrence d'une somme de *cent millions*; car l'intention formelle du roi est de ne jamais mettre le salut de son empire dans la dépendance de personne.

## ART. IV.

“ Les états généraux examineront avec soin la situation des finances, et ils demanderont tous les renseignemens propres à les éclairer parfaitement.

## ART. V.

“ Le tableau des revenus et des dépenses sera rendu public chaque année, dans une forme proposée par les états généraux, et approuvée par sa majesté.

ART.



## ART. VI.

“ Les sommes attribuées à chaque département seront déterminées d’une manière fixe et invariable, et le roi soumet à cette règle générale les fonds même qui sont destinés à l’entretien de sa maison.

## ART. VII.

“ Le roi veut que pour assurer cette fixité des diverses dépenses de l’état, il lui soit indiqué par les états généraux les dispositions propres à remplir ce but ; et sa majesté les adoptera si elles s’accordent avec la dignité royale et la célérité indispensable du service public.

## ART. VIII.

“ Les représentans d’une nation fidèle aux loix de l’honneur et de la probité ne donneront aucune atteinte à la foi publique et le roi attend d’eux que la confiance des créanciers de l’état soit assurée et consolidée de la manière la plus authentique.

ART.

## ART. IX.

“ Lorsque les dispositions formelles annoncées par le clergé et la noblesse de renoncer à leurs privilèges pécuniaires, auront été réalisées par leurs délibérations, l'intention du roi est de les sanctionner; et qu'il n'existe plus dans le paiement des contributions pécuniaires aucune espèce de privilèges ou distinctions.

## ART. X.

“ Le roi veut que pour consacrer une disposition si importante, le nom de *taille* soit aboli dans le royaume, et qu'on réunisse cet impôt, soit aux vingtièmes, soit à toute autre imposition territoriale, ou qu'il soit enfin remplacé de quelque manière, mais toujours d'après des proportions justes, égales, et sans distinction d'état, de rang, et de naissance.

## ART. XI.

“ Le roi veut que le droit de franc-fief soit aboli du moment où les revenus et les dépenses fixes de l'état auront été mis dans une exacte balance.

## ART. XII.

“ Toutes les propriétés, sans exception, seront constamment respectées, et sa majesté comprend expressément sous le nom de propriétés les *dîmes, cens, rentes, droits, et devoirs féodaux et seigneuriaux*, et généralement tous les droits et prérogatives utiles ou honorifiques, attachés aux terres et aux fiefs, ou appartenans aux personnes.

## ART. XIII.

“ Les deux premiers ordres de l'état continueront à jouir de l'exemption des charges personnelles; mais le roi approuvera que les états généraux s'occupent des moyens de convertir ces sortes de charges en contributions pécuniaires, et qu'alors tous les ordres de l'état y soyent assujettis également.

## ART. XIV.

“ L'intention de sa majesté est de déterminer d'après l'avis des états généraux, quels seront les emplois et les charges qui conserveront à l'avenir le privilège de donner et de transmettre la noblesse. Sa majesté néanmoins,

néanmoins, selon le droit inherent à sa couronne accordera des lettres des noblesse à ceux de ses sujets qui, par des services rendus au roi et à l'état, se feroient montrés dignes de cette récompense.

## ART. XV.

“ Le roi, désirant assurer la liberté personnelle de tous les citoyens d'une manière solide et durable, invite les états généraux à chercher et à lui proposer les moyens les plus convenables de concilier l'abolition des ordres connus sous le nom de *lettres de cachet*, avec le maintien de la sûreté publique et avec les précautions nécessaires, soit pour ménager dans certains cas l'honneur des familles, soit pour réprimer avec célérité les commencemens de sédition, soit pour garantir l'état des effets d'une intelligence criminelle avec les puissances étrangères.

## ART. XVI.

“ Les états généraux examineront et feront connoître à sa majesté le moyen le plus convenable de concilier la liberté de la presse avec le respect dû à la religion, aux mœurs, et à l'honneur des citoyens.

## ART. XVII.

“ Il sera établi, dans les diverses provinces ou généralités du royaume, des états provinciaux composés de deux dixièmes de membre du clergé dont une partie sera nécessairement choisie dans l'ordre épiscopal : de trois dixièmes de membres de la noblesse, et de cinq dixièmes de membres du tiers état.

## ART. XVIII.

“ Les membres de ces états provinciaux feront librement élus par les ordres respectifs, et une mesure quelconque de propriété sera nécessaire pour être électeur ou éligible.

## ART. XIX.

“ Les députés à ces états provinciaux délibéreront dans les assemblées provinciales que ces états remplaceront.

## ART. XX.

“ Une commission intermédiaire choisie par ces états, administrera les affaires de la province pendant l'intervalle d'une tenue à l'autre ;

l'autre ; et ces commissions intermédiaires devenant seules responsables de leur gestion, auront pour délégués des personnes choisies uniquement par elles ou par les états provinciaux.

## ART. XXI.

“ Les états généraux proposeront au roi leurs vues pour toutes les autres parties de l'organisation intérieure des états provinciaux, et pour le choix des formes applicables à l'élection des membres de cette assemblée.

## ART. XXII.

“ Indépendamment des objets d'administration dont les assemblées provinciales sont chargées, le roi confiera aux états provinciaux l'administration des hôpitaux, des prisons, des dépôts de mendicité, des enfans-trouvés, l'inspection des dépenses des villes, la surveillance sur l'entretien des forêts, sur la garde et la vente des bois, et sur d'autres objets qui pourroient être administrés plus utilement par les provinces.

## ART. XXIII.

“ Les contestations survenues dans les provinces où il existe d’anciens états, et les réclamations élevées contre la constitution de ces assemblées, devront fixer l’attention des états généraux; ils feront connoître à sa majesté les dispositions de justice et de sagesse qu’il est convenable d’adopter pour établir un ordre fixe dans l’administration de ces mêmes provinces.

## ART. XXIV.

“ Le roi invite les états généraux à s’occuper de la recherche des moyens propres à tirer le parti le plus avantageux des domaines qui sont dans ses mains, et de lui proposer également leurs vues sur ce qu’il peut y avoir de plus convenable à faire relativement aux domaines engagés.

## ART. XXV.

“ Les états généraux s’occuperont du projet conçu depuis long tems par sa majesté, de porter les douanes aux frontières du royaume, à fin que la plus parfaite liberté  
règne

règne dans la circulation intérieure des marchandises nationales ou étrangères.

## ART. XXVI.

“ Sa majesté désire que les fâcheux effets de l'impôt sur le sel et l'importance de ce revenu soient discutés soigneusement et que dans toutes les suppositions on propose, au moins, des moyens d'en adoucir la perception.

## ART. XXVII.

“ Sa majesté veut aussi qu'on examine attentivement les avantages et les inconvénients des droits d'aides et autres impôts, mais sans perdre de vue la nécessité absolue d'assurer une exacte balance entre les revenus et les dépenses de l'état.

## ART. XXVIII.

“ Selon le vœu que le roi a manifesté par sa déclaration du 23 Septembre dernier, sa majesté examinera avec une sérieuse attention les projets qui lui seront présentés relativement à l'administration de la justice, et aux moyens de perfectionner les loix civiles et criminelles.



## ART. XXIX.

“ Le roi veut que les loix qu’il aura fait promulguer pendant la tenue et d’après l’avis ou selon le vœu des états généraux, n’éprouvent pour leur enrégistrement et pour leur exécution aucun retardement ni aucun obstacle dans toute l’étendue de son royaume,

## ART. XXX.

“ Sa majesté veut que l’usage de la corvée pour la confection et l’entretien des chemins soit entièrement et pour toujours aboli dans son royaume.

## ART. XXXI.

“ Le roi désire que l’abolition du droit de main-morte, dont sa majesté a donné l’exemple dans ses domaines, soit étendue dans toute la France, et qu’il lui soit proposé les moyens de pourvoir à l’indemnité qui pourroit être dûe aux seigneurs en possession de ce droit.

## ART. XXXII.

“ Sa majesté fera connoître incessamment aux états généraux les réglemens dont elle s’occupe

s'occupe pour restreindre les capitaineries, et donner encore dans cette partie, qui tient de plus près à ses jouissances personnelles, un nouveau témoignage de son amour pour ses peuples.

## ART. XXXIII.

“ Le roi invite les états généraux à considérer le tirage de la milice sous tous ses rapports, et à s'occuper des moyens de concilier ce qui est dû à la défense de l'état avec les adoucissements que sa majesté désire pouvoir procurer à ses sujets.

## ART. XXXIV.

“ Le roi veut que toutes les dispositions d'ordre public et de bienfaisance envers ses peuples, que sa majesté aura sanctionnées par son autorité pendant la présente tenue des états généraux, celles entr'autres relatives à la liberté personnelle, à l'égalité des contributions, à l'établissement des états provinciaux, ne puissent jamais être changées sans le consentement des trois ordres, pris séparément ; sa majesté les place à l'avance  
au

au rang des propriétés nationales, qu'elle veut mettre comme toutes les autres propriétés, sous la garde la plus assurée.

## ART. XXXV.

“ Sa majesté après avoir appelé les états généraux à s'occuper, de concert avec elle, des grands objets d'utilité publique et de tout ce qui peut contribuer au bonheur de son peuple, déclare de la manière la plus expresse qu'elle veut conserver en son entier, et sans la moindre atteinte, l'institution de l'armée, ainsi que toute autorité, police, et pouvoir sur le militaire, tels que les monarques François en ont constamment joui.”

Le roi avant de se retirer, a prononcé le discours suivant.

“ Vous venez, messieurs, d'entendre le résultat de mes dispositions et de mes vues ; elles sont conformes au vif desir que j'ai d'opérer le bien public ; et si, par une fatalité loin de ma pensée, vous m'abandonniés dans une si belle entreprise, seul, je ferai le bien de mes peuples ; seul je me confidè-

rerai comme leur véritable représentant ; et connoissant vos cahiers, connoissant l'accord parfait qui existe entre le vœu le plus général de la nation et mes intentions bien-faisantes, j'aurai toute la confiance que doit inspirer une si rare harmonie, et je marcherai vers le but auquel je veux atteindre avec tout le courage et la fermeté qu'il doit m'inspirer.

“ Réfléchissés, messieurs, qu'aucun de vos projets, aucune de vos dispositions, ne peut avoir force de loi sans mon approbation spéciale. Ainsi je suis le garant naturel de vos droits respectifs ; et tous les ordres de l'état peuvent se reposer sur mon équitable impartialité. Toute défiance de votre part seroit un grande injustice. C'est moi jusqu'à présent qui fais tout pour le bonheur de mes peuples ; et il est rare peut-être que l'unique ambition d'un souverain soit d'obtenir de ses sujets, qu'ils s'entendent enfin pour accepter ses bienfaits.

“ Je vous ordonne, messieurs, de vous séparer tout de suite, et de vous rendre  
demain

demain matin, chacun dans les chambres affectées à votre ordre, pour y reprendre vos séances. J'ordonne, en conséquence, au grand maître des cérémonies de faire préparer les salles."

## No. II.

*Lettre du Roi à l'Assemblée Nationale.*

“ Paris, le 24 Novembre 1791.

“ JE suis informé, M. le Président, que l'assemblée nationale, après avoir entendu le rapport de son comité diplomatique sur la proposition contenue dans la lettre du ministre de la marine, en date du 31 Octobre dernier, concernant les demandes du Dey d'Alger, et les sommes à voter pour l'armement ordonné à Toulon, a décrété le 15 de ce mois, qu'il n'y avoit pas lieu à délibérer, quant-à-présent, sur cette proposition, attendu qu'elle n'étoit pas dans la forme constitutionnelle.

“ Je vous ai déjà marqué, relativement aux fonds extraordinaires, destinés à la dépense extraordinaire qu'exigent les armemens qui doivent porter des secours à Saint Domingue, que la constitution ne prescrivoit pas une forme différente de celle que  
le

le ministre de la marine avoit suivie en faisant par mon ordre la demande de ces fonds sous sa responsabilité ; mais puisque la même difficulté se renouvelle aujourd'hui à l'occasion de l'armement de prévoyance sollicité par le commerce de Marseille, l'obligation que j'ai contractée d'employer tout le pouvoir qui m'est confié, à maintenir la constitution, m'impose le devoir d'en rappeler ici les principes.

“ En déterminant de la manière la plus précise les différentes relations du roi avec le corps législatif, la constitution a essentiellement attaché à la prérogative royale le droit de proposer des loix sur certains objets, et celui d'inviter le corps législatif à en prendre d'autres en considération. L'acte par lequel le roi juge à-propos d'exercer l'un et l'autre de ces droits étant toujours un acte purement royal, de la même nature que la sanction, n'exige, comme elle, le contreseing d'un ministre, que pour attester la signature du roi, et n'emporte aucune responsabilité ; au lieu que les demandes de fonds, pour les dépenses ordinaires ou  
extra-

extraordinaires du gouvernement étant évidemment des actes purement exécutifs doivent toujours émaner directement des ministres du roi pour avoir la garantie de leur responsabilité. Tel est l'esprit et le système général de la constitution."

Les dispositions suivantes en ont posé les bases :

" Le roi peut seulement inviter le corps législatif à prendre un objet en considération. (Chap. iii. sect. 1. art. 1.) J'usurai de cette faculté toutes les fois que la gloire, le bonheur, ou les intérêts de la nation l'exigeront."

" Le paragraphe viii. du même article délègue au corps législatif la faculté, ' de statuer annuellement après la proposition du roi sur le nombre d'hommes et de vaisseaux, dont les armées de terre et de mer seront composées, sur la solde et le nombre d'individus de chaque grade,' &c. Je me conformerai à cet article dans les états généraux que j'adresserai au commencement de chaque année au corps législatif, et dans  
les



les propositions particulières de la même nature que des circonstances extraordinaires pourroient exiger dans le cours de l'année.

“ ‘La guerre ne peut être décidée que par un décret du corps législatif rendu sur la proposition formelle et nécessaire du roi, et sanctionné par lui.’ (Chap. iii. sect. 1. art. 2.) J'espère que je ne serai jamais dans le cas d'adresser une semblable proposition au corps législatif. La paix est trop nécessaire au bonheur de la France pour que je n'emploie pas à la maintenir tous les moyens qui pourront se concilier avec l'honneur de la nation.

“ La disposition suivante du même article porte que, ‘ Dans le cas d'hostilités imminentes ou commencés, d'un allié à soutenir, ou d'un droit à conserver par la force des armes, le roi en donnera, sans aucun délai, la notification au corps législatif, et en fera connoître les motifs.’ Je me conformerai toujours à cette disposition, avec l'extrême circonspection qu'exige l'intérêt de l'état. Ce seroit s'en écarter d'une manière bien dangereuse, que de notifier au  
corps

corps législatif, comme hostilités imminentes de simples doutes sur les dispositions d'une puissance étrangère. Cette notification inconfidérée seroit bien plus propre à déterminer une rupture qu'à la prévenir. Il suffit en pareil cas de prendre les mesures de prévoyance qu'exige la sûreté extérieure du royaume, et c'est au roi que la constitution a exclusivement délégué ce soin important. (Chap. iv. art. 1.)

“ Je m'en suis occupé et m'en occuperai toujours avec la vigilance la plus active, et les frais extraordinaires qu'ont exigé jusqu'à ce moment les différens armemens et les mouvemens de troupes que j'ai jugés nécessaires, ont toujours été ordonnés sur la simple demande du ministre de la marine, faite par mes ordres, parce qu'aux termes de la constitution, chap. ii. sect. 4. art. 7. c'est sur l'apperçu des dépenses à faire dans les départemens respectifs, que le corps législatif doit en ordonner les fonds. Cet article ne fait mention que des dépenses ordinaires, mais il est impossible de ne pas l'appliquer

aux dépenses extraordinaires de la même nature.

“ La constitution ne prescrivant par une forme différente relativement à ces dépenses, les à nécessairement rangées dans la même classe, en leur assurant la même responsabilité par l’art. 8. de la même section ; ce qui ne pourroit pas être, si elles émanoient immédiatement du roi, au lieu d’être faites par les ministres qui sont les agens que la constitution lui a donnés pour les actes purement exécutifs.

“ L’art. 9. sect. 4. chap. iii. porte que ‘ tous les actes de la correspondance du roi avec le corps législatif doivent être contre-signés par un ministre.’ Mais ce seroit donner à la constitution l’interprétation la plus contraire aux principes qui en sont la base, que de conclure de cet article, qu’aucune des fonctions essentielles, confiée au pouvoir exécutif, doive nécessairement être l’objet de la correspondance personnelle du roi avec le corps législatif, parce qu’il en résulteroit évidemment pour toutes les fonctions qui seroient rangées dans cette classe

classe un deffaut entier de responsabilité, et une inaction absolue dans la marche de l'adminiftration, toutes les fois qu'il plairoit au roi de garder le filence. La constitution, fans déterminer aucun cas où la correspondance personnelle du roi avec le corps législatif seroit nécessaire à voulu seulement que tous les actes de cette correspondance fussent contre-signés par un ministre ; elle n'a pas été plus loin ; je dois m'arrêter avec elle, parcequ'elle interdit formellement à tous les pouvoirs constitués le droit de la changer dans son ensemble ni dans ses parties.

(Signé)

LOUIS.

Et plus bas, par le roi,

BERTRAND."

## No. III.

*Lettre de Rouyer au Roi.*

“SIRE,

“**L**'UN des citoyens à qui le peuple a confié la pénible et glorieuse mission de lui donner des lois et de veiller à son bonheur, vient appeler votre attention sur l'état actuel du royaume, et vous proposer les moyens d'assurer sa gloire et sa félicité. Profondément occupé des maux qui déchirent ma patrie, j'ai dû compter aussi ses innombrables ressources ; j'ai sondé ses blessures, et calculé ses forces ; j'ai tout comparé, tout approfondi, tout prévu : aujourd'hui j'annonce à votre majesté, que d'elle seule dépend l'exécution des lois, et par conséquent le salut de l'empire ; qu'elle peut en deux mots cicatrifier ses plaies, dissiper ses alarmes, annihiler ses périls ; qu'elle peut rendre à la France le repos qui  
la

la fuit, la dignité qui lui convient, et au trône l'amour qui l'affermirait avec l'éclat qui le décore. Sire, je ne demande, pour exécuter ce noble dessein, que la direction des moyens que la loi vous confie, et l'emploi des forces que la constitution place dans vos mains, et j'offre ma tête pour gage de la fidélité de mes promesses, de la sagesse de mon plan, et de la certitude de vos succès. Et ne croyez point, sire, que le zèle du bien public ennobliant à mes yeux les illusions de l'amour propre, j'embrasse sans examen l'espoir consolant de vous rendre le bonheur (car le vôtre dépend de celui de l'état). Je fais que des obstacles nombreux s'opposent au développement de la puissance publique et combattent sans cesse les bienfaits de la loi. Je vous par-tout la sédition qui s'agite et l'autorité qui se cache, l'anarchie qui s'élève et le gouvernement qui n'ose la comprimer : vos ministres, sire, vous ont offert trop souvent ce tableau funeste ; ils vous ont annoncé les troubles sans vous en expliquer les causes ; et s'ils ont conçu l'idée de les terminer, ils ont été sans cesse ar-

trêtés par des obstacles et des périls exagérés. Je les connois et je les brave ; la foiblesse les compte, le génie les détruit, et laisse à l'historien le soin de les décrire quand il les a dévorés.

« Voilà, sire, les glorieux travaux auxquels je vous invite, en vous apportant le tribut de mon courage, de mes forces morales et physiques, et de mon profond respect. Agréez l'hommage d'un citoyen que des bruits imposteurs vous ont présenté peut-être comme un homme ardent, ennemi de l'ordre et du trône ; mais qui, commandant à la renommée par ses actions, prouvera par-tout que la nature et l'honneur ont gravé dans son ame l'amour de sa patrie et de son roi.

« Sire, je le répète encore à votre majesté, je m'engage à rétablir, dans deux mois, la paix au-dedans, la considération au-dehors, la félicité publique et l'autorité royale, si vous daignez adopter les conseils que mon zèle vous dictera. Je n'ambitionne ni le faste des honneurs, ni la gloire des récompenses ; je ne veux rien que sau-

ver

ver mon pays ; vous pouvez beaucoup y contribuer, et j'aime à croire que vous n'avez besoin que d'en connoître les moyens : j'irai les découvrir à votre majesté ; j'irai vous révéler ce que vos ministres vous cachent, ou vous apprendre ce qu'ils ignorent : vous verrez par vous-même l'état de l'empire ; vous apprécierez les hommes auxquels la loi vous permet de commander ; vous entendrez ceux que le peuple environne de sa confiance ; et si vous embrassez le système de conduite que je vous offrirai, vous verrez les soupçons et les allarmes qu'on a semés autour de vous, dissipés par l'amour et le respect de tous le Français. Vous verrez le pouvoir que la constitution vous donne, accru par l'opinion, soutenu par l'estime, affermi par la confiance de tous les citoyens ; et la Reine, partageant avec votre majesté le résultat du bonheur public, sentira qu'il n'est de félicité pure que celle qui naît de la bienfaisance et des vertus. Mais aucune partie de ce plan ne pourroit s'exécuter, si votre majesté n'étoit pas animée du desir sincère de conserver,



dans son ensemble et dans ses détails, la constitution de l'état ; si, troublé par les cris des prêtres fanatiques, les menaces des émigrés rebelles, les démarches des princes étrangers, vous n'étiez pas profondément convaincu de la nécessité de braver cette ligue impuissante qui se forme contre nous. Pour moi, sire, je connois si bien nos forces et nos moyens, qu'en jettant les yeux sur les ennemis qui nous menacent, j'ai peine à me défendre d'un sentiment de pitié. Elevé à la hauteur de la liberté, de l'égalité, ces divinités colossales qui foulent aux pieds toutes les intrigues et toutes les passions, j'ai porté mes regards sur toutes les cours de l'Europe, et je suis bien sûr de les forcer à la paix.

“Oui, sire, vous pouvez éviter la guerre étrangère, ou du moins créer la paix intérieure par le succès de nos armes ; vous pouvez rendre votre autorité plus révérée, plus auguste, plus étendue ; vous pouvez devenir le dieu tutélaire des Français. Par vous, la religion triomphera des indécentes querelles, des intolérantes maximes des Prêtres réfractaires

réfractaires et constitutionnels. Par vous, la justice et la raison pénétreront enfin dans l'ame des aristocrates, et vous les ramènerez peut-être au sein de la patrie défarmée par leurs remords. Je jouirai dans le silence du fruit de mes conseils et de votre courage; heureux du bonheur de tous, je dirigerai vers vous seul la reconnoissance publique, et mon cœur sera satisfait. Les ambitieux qui veulent élever l'édifice de leur fortune sur les débris de la monarchie, les insensés qui pensent que la liberté ne peut s'établir que sur des sceptres brisés, tous les partis, toutes les cabales ramperont en sifflant aux pieds d'un trône élevé sur les bases de la constitution. Les sociétés populaires, dont on vous fait redouter sans raison l'exaltation, ne se réuniront que pour vous adresser des vœux et, des hommages.

“ Tel est, sire, le tableau fidèle des changemens que vous pouvez opérer par des moyens dont je vous offre le secret et le développement. La méfiance ne doit point assiéger votre cœur et lui faire repousser un citoyen fidèle. Si, sur le trône où la naissance

naissance et la loi vous ont placé, dans les circonstances pénibles qui vous environnent, je trouvois un secours pareil, aucune malveillance, aucune suggestion étrangère, ne me détermineroient à le rejeter.

“ J’attends, sire, avec une confiance respectueuse, la décision de votre majesté ; ma démarche et ma lettre appellent un examen ; qu’il soit sévère comme la raison, impartial comme la justice ; mais s’il ne procure point une réponse à laquelle j’attache le sort de l’état, permettez, sire, qu’appellant dans cette cause extraordinaire ceux dont elle embrasse les plus chers intérêts, je soumette ma lettre au jugement du peuple Français.

(Signé)      ROUYER, *Citoyen*.

Paris, ce 17 Mars 1792.”

## No. IV.

*Discours prononcé par M. de Bertrand, ministre de la marine, à l'assemblée nationale, le 19 Décembre 1791, sur l'état actuel de la colonie de Saint Domingue.*

“ Messieurs,

“ JE vous ai rendu compte des mesures prises par le roi pour envoyer des secours aux habitants de Saint Domingue, aussitôt que leurs malheurs et leurs dangers ont été connus de sa majesté. Insuffisans en eux-mêmes, sans doute, leur succès dépendoit uniquement de leur célérité, et de l'assurance qu'ils seroient suivis de plus importants. Mais avant de les déterminer, il a fallu connoître les véritables causes des troubles qui ont amené cette grande catastrophe; je n'ai rien négligé pour les découvrir, parceque cette découverte pouvoit seule diriger dans l'application des moyens qui doivent en prévenir le retour.

“ Les

“ Les uns accusent les colons d’avoir voulu se donner aux Anglois : ‘ Depuis qu’on a détruit (disent-ils) la féodalité en France, les planteurs ont justement redouté chez eux la destruction d’une tyrannie plus barbare encore ; et prévoyant que la terre classique de la liberté et de l’égalité ne pouvoit protéger l’esclavage, ils veulent rompre tous leurs liens avec elle.’ ”

“ On cite à l’appui de cette accusation, des démarches inconsidérées de quelques-uns d’entre eux ; des discours tenus dans un mouvement de colère, par des hommes dont les passions terribles sous un ciel brûlant, sont d’autant plus faciles à s’irriter de la moindre contrariété, qu’ils sont moins accoutumés à en éprouver, moins habitués à se contraindre. ”

“ D’autres, au contraire, ne voyent la cause de leurs maux que dans les écrits incendiaires répandus dans les colonies à dessein de soulever les nègres ; dans les correspondances entretenues depuis long-temps entre les gens de couleur et une société dite de *philantropes*, fondée sur un système destructeur,

fructeur, disent-ils, de toutes propriétés coloniales, et dont voici l'origine et les principes.

“ On conçoit sans peine que pour un peuple libre, et qui a toujours été digne de l'être, les premières jouissances qu'il devoit à ces établissemens, ayent été troublées par le regret de ne les devoir qu'au malheur de l'esclavage.

“ Cet élan d'une nation généreuse et sensible, qui l'honore d'autant plus, qu'il est irréfléchi ; ce reproche, cette espèce de remords qui n'a pas besoin d'être juste ou fondé, pour faire estimer celui qui l'éprouve, devoit affecter tous les Français ; et la manière de traiter leurs nègres plus douce, plus humaine que celle des autres peuples, devoit en être le fruit.

“ C'est-là que se bornèrent d'abord les effets d'un sentiment si naturel et si sage. L'esprit philosophique qui dominoit en France, plus ambitieux, crut devoir pousser plus loin la conquête, et rendre ces regrets plus productifs ; il appuya de toutes les forces

forces du raisonnement, la théorie d'un sentiment qu'il eût peut-être suffi d'éprouver.

“ D'après leur système, les colonies, ces possessions pour lesquelles on faisoit gémir l'humanité et fléchir les principes, n'avoient pas l'importance que la cupidité leur avoit prêtée jusqu'alors, et elles étoient ruineuses pour la nation abusée. Le possibilité de les remplacer par des possessions plus rapprochées, sous un climat de même température (celui de l'Afrique et des îles de la Méditerranée, par exemple), la nécessité de se détacher un jour de ces terres éloignées, habitées par des hommes dont tout faisoit prévoir et l'ingratitude et l'infidélité, &c. ; tous ces motifs réunis ne firent envisager dans cet abandon volontaire qu'une anticipation d'événemens auxquelles on devoit s'attendre, et l'avantage de s'y préparer, en ouvrant d'avance des sources d'une utilité plus durable. Nos voisins plus sages, avoient fait de pareils calculs par rapport à leurs colonies du nord de l'Amérique, pour prouver par les sommes employées à

les soutenir, qu'elles leur étoient onéreuses ; mais c'étoit pour se consoler de les avoir perdues ; mais c'étoient des colonies continentales, qui n'avoient de ressemblance que le nom avec les colonies de l'archipel Américain.

“ Cette différence ne frappa point tous les esprits ; et quand les intérêts du commerce parurent seconder l'intérêt de l'humanité, le nombre des philanthropes s'accrut de tous ceux dont la sensibilité avoit besoin pour être émue, d'autres motifs que ceux de la philanthropie.

“ “ C'est un système (disent les colons) dont l'erreur et les jeux cruels ont produit les scènes sanglantes dont nous avons été les victimes. Suivez à la trace, disent-ils, les mouvemens et les effets de ce zèle prosé-  
litique, qui avoit d'abord prêché l'abolition de l'esclavage et la liberté absolue des nègres ; qui modérant ensuite ses prétentions, pour mieux graduer ses progrès, fut les borner à la suppression de la traite, et qui enfin par une marche plus adroite et plus sûre, paroit avoir circonscrit son intérêt au  
fort



fort des gens de couleur, pour nous perdre plus sûrement. Croiroit-on impossible qu'un système dont l'humanité semble être la base, fût capable de produire des effets aussi cruels : l'histoire de ces mêmes climats ne fournit-elle pas un trait dont l'analogie et la ressemblance ne peut qu'honorer les philanthropes les plus délicats ? N'est-ce pas au sensible et pieux Las-Cazas, que l'Amérique doit ses nègres ! N'est-ce pas ce vertueux Espagnol qui, touché des maux que ses concitoyens faisoient souffrir aux naturels du pays, en les acablent de travaux, courut en Afrique chercher des hommes, qui déjà dévoués à l'esclavage, pussent sans aggravation de maux et par un simple échange de chaînes, sous un climat pareil à celui de leur pays natal, remplacer l'Américain faible, qui aussi peu fait à la fatigue qu'à l'esclavage, succomboit également sous le poids du travail et *sous celui des fers* ! Si ce pieux missionnaire se repentit du moyen que lui suggéra son humanité trompée, il n'en est pas moins vrai que pour avoir voulu sauver quelques Caraïbes qui avoient survécu à

tant

tant de peines, il y dévoua des milliers d'individus, que la cupidité, excitée par les nombreux achats d'esclaves en Afrique, fit condamner à le devenir. Supposez aux philanthropes modernes des intentions aussi pures, il n'en fera pas moins vrai que pour avoir tenté d'abolir l'esclavage des noirs, ils auront réduit au désespoir, à la misère, cinq ou six millions d'individus blancs, leurs concitoyens, leurs amis, leurs frères, et renversé une des plus fortes colonnes de la puissance nationale : il n'en fera pas moins vrai qu'ils n'auroient pas même fait le bonheur de ceux qu'ils avoient voulu servir ; qu'il eût fallu pour l'opérer, le concours de tous les états qui possèdent des colonies, et que l'abolition de l'esclavage devoit être l'action simultanée de toutes les puissances intéressées. Sans cet accord d'action et de volonté que l'on suppose si facile à obtenir, les colonies n'ont que le choix d'un protecteur, et les esclaves celui d'un maître. Ces derniers peuvent bien partiellement, et comme ils nous l'ont trop cruellement prouvé, nous égorger, nous, nos

femmes, nos enfans, et tous ceux qui les commandent ; mais ce sera pour obéir à d'autres, et sur cette espèce de galère que de tristes destinées ont placée au milieu des mers, sur ces bancs où la philanthropie aveugle à conduit elle-même et fixé l'esclavage, le soulèvement de la chiourme ne fera que rendre son sort plus misérable.'

" Tels sont, messieurs, les moyens de défense et d'attaque tour-à-tour employés par les planteurs et par leurs antagonistes. C'est sous le rapport purement administratif que j'ai dû examiner les causes, quelles qu'elles soient, qui ont amené les troubles de Saint Domingue, afin de mettre en usage les moyens propres à les prévenir.

" Quant à l'inculpation faite aux colons, d'avoir voulu se donner aux Anglois, aux Américains, je ne connois rien, je n'ai rien vu, qui annonce un projet aussi coupable. D'ailleurs, comment seroient-ils arrivés à cette fin, en soulevant les nègres contre eux, en faisant piller et ravager leurs possessions ? Pourquoi, en s'offrant à une nouvelle métropole, auroient-ils voulu ne lui  
présenter

présenter qu'un monceau de cendres et de ruines ? . . . . Quant au dessein de se rendre indépendans, aucun fait de leur part n'annonce un projet aussi extravagant ; et leur position et leur foiblesse, à leur nature même leur fait un devoir, un besoin de la dépendance. . . . On les a même accusés de vouloir opérer une contre-révolution ; j'avoue que pour quiconque ne peut croire à la possibilité d'une contre-révolution en France, les moyens de l'opérer à 1800 lieues de la mère-patrie, paroissent encore plus étranges, et appelleroient le ridicule sur l'accusation, si le spectacle de tant de maux pouvoit permettre d'autres sensations que des affections douloureuses. Quant à l'accusation portée contre les partisans de la liberté des noirs, je ne puis pas dissimuler qu'elle paroît beaucoup plus fondée ; mais, quelle que soit la cause de ces désastres, par quels secours faut-il les réparer, par quels moyens faut-il en empêcher le retour ?

“ Le premier de tous et le plus utile sans doute, est la connoissance de nos véritables intérêts et de nos vrais rapports commerci-

aux avec les colonies, puisque l'ignorance de ces principes est la première source de tant d'erreurs et de tant de calamités.

“ Il faut considérer nos colonies à sucre comme autant de manufactures établies à 1800 lieues de la métropole; et la métropole elle-même comme une société de capitalistes qui ont fourni aux frais de cet établissement d'agriculture et d'industrie, soit pour le fonder, soit pour l'entretenir, soit pour le protéger. Tous les membres de la métropole sont actionnaires de cette importante spéculation; pour en partager les bénéfices, on n'a besoin que de naître en France, et tous les citoyens Français, tous, oui, tous sont intéressés à sa prospérité, quoiqu'à des titres différens; les uns comme agriculteurs et propriétaires de terres, qui en tout ou en partie, sont cultivées pour fournir aux besoins de ces consommateurs lointains, et qui seroient ruinés sans cet important débouché de leur denrée; les autres, comme possesseurs de quelque genre d'industrie, exercé en tout ou en partie pour les besoins des colons, et dont les pro-

duits feroient invendus ; les autres enfin, comme commerçans, navigateurs, caboteurs, &c. troisième classe chargée de leur apporter les productions des deux autres. Quelque place qu'on occupe dans cette société, quelle que soit la somme et la nature d'actions qu'on y porte, depuis le cultivateur laborieux jusqu'au capitaliste oisif, depuis l'industriel manouvrier, jusqu'à l'agiotier stérile, depuis le hardi spéculateur, jusqu'au timide rentier, tous, oui, tous sont intéressés au sort de ces riches établissemens ; et, comme on l'a dit encore, il n'est pas jusqu'à la calomnie qui, par eux, ne débite avec profit ses poisons.

“ De quelque manière qu'on les dirige ou qu'on les administre, ces établissemens conservent toujours leur caractère primitif d'entreprise formée par la métropole, dont elle seule doit recevoir le bénéfice et supporter les pertes. Dans le tems même où le gouvernement, abusé si l'on veut, en accordoit la jouissance ou le commerce exclusif à des sociétés particulières, à des compagnies, il ne faisoit que céder à quelques-

uns le droit de tous, mas à des conditions qui devoient tourner au profit de tous. C'étoit une mine que l'état affermoit, au lieu de l'exploiter lui-même : peut-être diminueoit-il les avantages de la grande société en faveur d'une plus petite : je ne cite cet exemple qu'àfin de prouver que, même dans ces contrats exclusifs, les produits de nos colonies ont été une entreprise à laquelle toute la nation étoit intéressée.

“ Quant aux calculs des sommes que ces établissemens ont coûté, en supposant qu'ils ne fussent pas exagérés, comment apprécier par de l'or et des chiffres les avantages que les Européens retirent de leurs colonies ? Peut-on ne pas voir dans l'accroissement sensible de notre population, le seul signe certain de prospérité publique, signe infaillible, qui marque tout-à-la-fois l'abondance des denrées et le besoin de bras (car les hommes naissent toujours là où les subsistances abondent, là ou le travail les appelle) ? ne voit-on pas que l'obligation de ne vendre ses productions qu'à des membres de la société ou de la métropole, et de n'acheter

acheter que d'eux seuls les objets de leurs besoins, forme une double source de richesses, dont la mesure est inappréciable? Si l'on considéroit les colonies, ou comme des provinces de l'empire, ou comme des états alliés, ce double monopole feroit l'impôt le plus onéreux et le plus injuste, le commerce le plus défavantageux, l'échange le plus inégal qui ait jamais été proposé entre deux parties d'un même empire, ou entre deux empires différens. En effet, les colonies sont obligées de n'acheter que de nous les objets de leur consommation, et ce premier monopole nous les fait vendre à un prix bien avantageux; elles s'obligent ensuite à ne livrer qu'à nous seuls tous leurs riches produits, et nous procurent à un prix modique, non-seulement ce qui suffit à la consommation de 25 millions d'hommes, mais encore un excédant immense que ceux-ci vendent avec bénéfice aux nations qui n'ont pas de colonies. Et tous ces avantages s'estimeroient par une série de chiffres, qui n'exprimant que des vérités de quantité, ne peuvent s'appliquer avec succès



qu'à des objets inanimés, matériellement susceptibles de retranchement ou d'addition ; d'autant plus certaines, qu'elles sont plus isolées, plus abstraites, et bornées à leur unique fonction de *mesures* : mesures dont l'application rigoureuse à la prospérité publique, aux gouvernemens, à tout ce qui tient aux hommes réunis en société, présente les résultats les plus absurdes, et qui nous expliquent, pour le dire en passant, comment les sciences les plus exactes une fois sorties du cercle des objets auxquels elles sont applicables, deviennent entre les mains de guides ambitieux, des signaux trompeurs qui ne servent qu'à égarer l'esprit qu'ils devoient éclairer.

“ Observez, messieurs, que ces erreurs funestes donneroient nécessairement à la fortune publique une marche rétrograde ; ce ne seroit plus le mouvement de cette roue de puissance qu'il faudroit modérer, c'est son mouvement même qu'il faudroit brusquement arrêter : c'est à l'instant, qu'il faudroit condamner à la plus grande inertie ces millions de bras employés jusqu'ici à  
la

la faire mouvoir, qu'il faudroit couper tous les fils qui servent à nous amener cette immensité de richesses. Vous apprécierez, Messieurs, les terribles effets de cette subite interfection.

“ C'est en considérant les colonies sous leur véritable rapport, qu'on sent la nécessité de déterminer pour elles un régime qui diffère des loix applicables à la France entière, ou à un département, sans que cet exemple fasse même une exception. Combien l'assemblée constituante montra de sagesse, lorsqu'elle laissa à votre décision l'admission ou le refus des représentans de colonies, qu'on pouvoit regarder comme des représentans d'une corporation ou d'une manufacture ! Tout s'explique en les examinant sous ce rapport. En effet, à les considérer comme portion ordinaire de l'empire seulement, les sommes immenses qu'on exige d'elles par le monopole, feroient un impôt injuste et onéreux ; c'est seulement à titre de produit et d'intérêts d'avances faites pour elles, qu'on peut en tirer autant de richesses. On comprend ainsi, comment,

comment, plus elle nous fournissent de productions, plus elles s'enrichissent ; (et ce n'est pas, comme on fait, l'effet ordinaire de l'impôt ;) et comment enfin cet accroissement dans la masse de leurs fournitures, nécessitant un plus grand nombre de demandes de nos denrées, donne la mesure reciproque de la prospérité de la colonie et de la métropole.

“ Cette réciprocité d'échanges et de richesses, si avantageuse pour la France, nous fait un devoir dans ce moment de réparer les désastres qu'un de ses plus riches établissemens vient d'éprouver. La perte totale à Saint Domingue est estimée se monter à un capital de 5 à 6 cent millions, dont le revenu fournissoit au chargement annuel de cent cinquante vaisseaux. Mais cette plaie, quelque profonde qu'elle soit, se réparera par la fécondité du sol et l'activité industrielle des colons, si l'on réunit à la fois des secours gratuits, des secours à titre de prêt ; si le commerce, éclairé sur ses intérêts, qui se lient ici en totalité avec l'intérêt général, se prête aux malheurs des cir-

confiances, s'il donne du temps à ses débiteurs ruinés, et s'il fait suspendre ses profits, pour les rendre plus assurés et plus durables. Il en a pris l'engagement généreux dans les nombreuses adresses que ses députés ont présentées au roi, & je ne crains pas de me porter pour garant de l'exaétitude avec laquelle cet engagement sera rempli.

“ Les premiers secours les plus appropriés aux circonstances, les plus rapprochés des besoins, sont l'abandon de notre créance sur les états-unis de l'Amérique. Cette manière de se libérer convient tout à la fois aux Américains et aux colons. Les premiers peuvent, à des conditions raisonnables, fournir aux habitations ravagées, les objets de la nécessité la plus urgente, tels que des bois, des vivres, des bêtes de somme, des animaux domestiques, et des maisons qui, taillées dans les forêts du nord de l'Amérique, vont s'élever à l'instant, et remplacer à moins de frais les bâtimens en pierres détruits ou incendiés.

“ Quelle plus utile destination pour les sommes que la nation généreuse avoit sacrifiées

fiées à procurer l'indépendance de ses alliés, et dont elle se croyoit payée avec usure par leur indépendance même ! Quel spectacle touchant pour le vrai philosophe, que celui que lui présentent les premiers biens de la liberté, réparant les maux de la licence !

“ Une des grandes mesures qui coûteront d'autant moins à sa majesté qu'elles lui sont présentées par la constitution, c'est de s'en rapporter à l'intérêt des colons eux-mêmes, pour régler les formes de distribution et répartition de ces mêmes secours à ceux qui ont souffert de l'incendie et du ravage, ainsi que le mode de contribution convenable à établir entre ceux dont les possessions ont été épargnées.

“ Les mesures de prévoyance forment la seconde classe de secours, et sans doute la plus importante.

“ A peine avoit-on connu les sources de prospérité que les colonies ouvroient à l'Europe que chaque puissance chercha à s'assurer la possession exclusive de ces richesses. Toutes les fortifications qu'on y établit, furent dirigées par cet esprit jaloux de conserver,

server, et d'après un système de défense sur les côtes, pour s'opposer aux invasions du dehors. Comment, en effet, prémunir l'intérieur de la colonie, contre des ennemis auxquels on ne devoit pas s'attendre ? Une triste expérience vient de prouver que ce sont les plus à craindre : elle doit nécessairement opérer quelque changement dans le premier système de fortification, qui d'ailleurs insuffisant par lui même, peut être supplée par des moyens plus puissans. Les fortifications qui de loin en loin bordent les côtes, plus effrayantes pour la terre qui les porte, que pour l'ennemi qui les évite, pourroient être avantageusement remplacées par des vaisseaux. Les premières pourroient être utilement appuyées de plusieurs petites redoutes placées plus avant dans l'intérieur, pour empêcher, en cas d'insurrection, la communication par les mornes : ces postes de sûreté, sans danger pour la liberté, suffiroient contre la licence.

“ L'établissement d'une gendarmerie coloniales, mieux organisée que les anciennes milices de St. Domingue, composée uniquement

ment de propriétaires, dont la masse entière, à l'exemple de nos gardes nationales, seroit prête à marcher au premier signal, et dont une portion seulement feroit un service actif et régulier ; . . . . des loix de police exécutées avec prudence et fermeté, qui s'appliqueroient à toutes les classes d'individus, aux hommes de toutes les couleurs ; un code complet de législation, qui concilieroit à la fois et la confiance que l'on doit aux colons propriétaires, administrateurs nés de ces établissemens, et la protection due aux hommes qui cultivent, contre des traitemens d'une rigueur capricieuse, exagérée ou inutile ; qui prévien-droit et puniroit les révoltes, comme les abus d'autorité qui les provoquent, et qui traiteroit plus sévèrement encore l'insensé ou plutôt le coupable qui trompe, que le malheureux abusé qu'il soulève—un règlement nouveau sur la manière de faire la traite, qui défende et punisse les excès de la cupidité, afin que ces tristes et malheureuses victimes de nos intérêts politiques, ne le soient plus du moins des intérêts particuliers, et qu'elles n'ayent pas à gémir tout  
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à-la-fois, et des rigueurs d'un sacrifice devenu nécessaire pour prévenir de plus grands maux, et des cruautés privées d'une fardide économie: tels sont les moyens que le roi me charge de vous proposer, et que vous peserez dans votre sagesse. Rendons hommage à la vraie philanthropie, dont les abus seuls et les fausses applications peuvent avoir eu les conséquences funestes dont on l'accuse. C'est à la sollicitation, à la persévérance touchante de quelques amis de l'humanité en Angleterre qu'on doit les deux derniers bills du parlement, relatifs à la traite, qui améliorent le sort des nègres, fixent le nombre que doit contenir chaque bâtiment négrier, et font la part de l'avarice pour l'empêcher de se la faire elle-même. Un peuple dont la sensibilité naturelle avoit devancé la loi, cherchera à les surpasser encore par des loix plus douces et plus humaines. Si vous joignez aux moyens que je viens de proposer, l'envoi de troupes pour garnir ces différens points fortifiés, en combinant l'influence funeste à la longue, d'un climat si différent du nôtre, si dangereux



dangerueux sur-tout, et si propre à relâcher les liens de la discipline militaire, peut-être fera-t-il utile de n'y laisser les mêmes corps que deux ou trois ans au plus ; peut-être aussi que la crainte fondée de faire passer la mer à une grande partie de l'armée par ces changemens successifs et triennaux, vous déterminera à d'autres mesures que les circonstances vous présenteront.

“ Quant à la défense extérieure, les principales fortifications qui conviennent à des colonies, sont des escadres toujours subsistantes, nombre de vaisseaux toujours en croisières : voilà les citadelles qu'il nous importe d'employer à cet objet ; elles ont l'avantage d'élever des matelots et des officiers, d'entretenir notre marine, et de faire respecter le pavillon national sur toutes les mers.

“ Si au milieu de ces grands intérêts, il m'étoit permis, messieurs, de vous parler de mon zèle, je renouvellerois ici l'assurance qu'aucune des entraves dont on cherche à l'embarasser ne pourra le ralentir. Les soins de l'administration la plus importante  
peut-

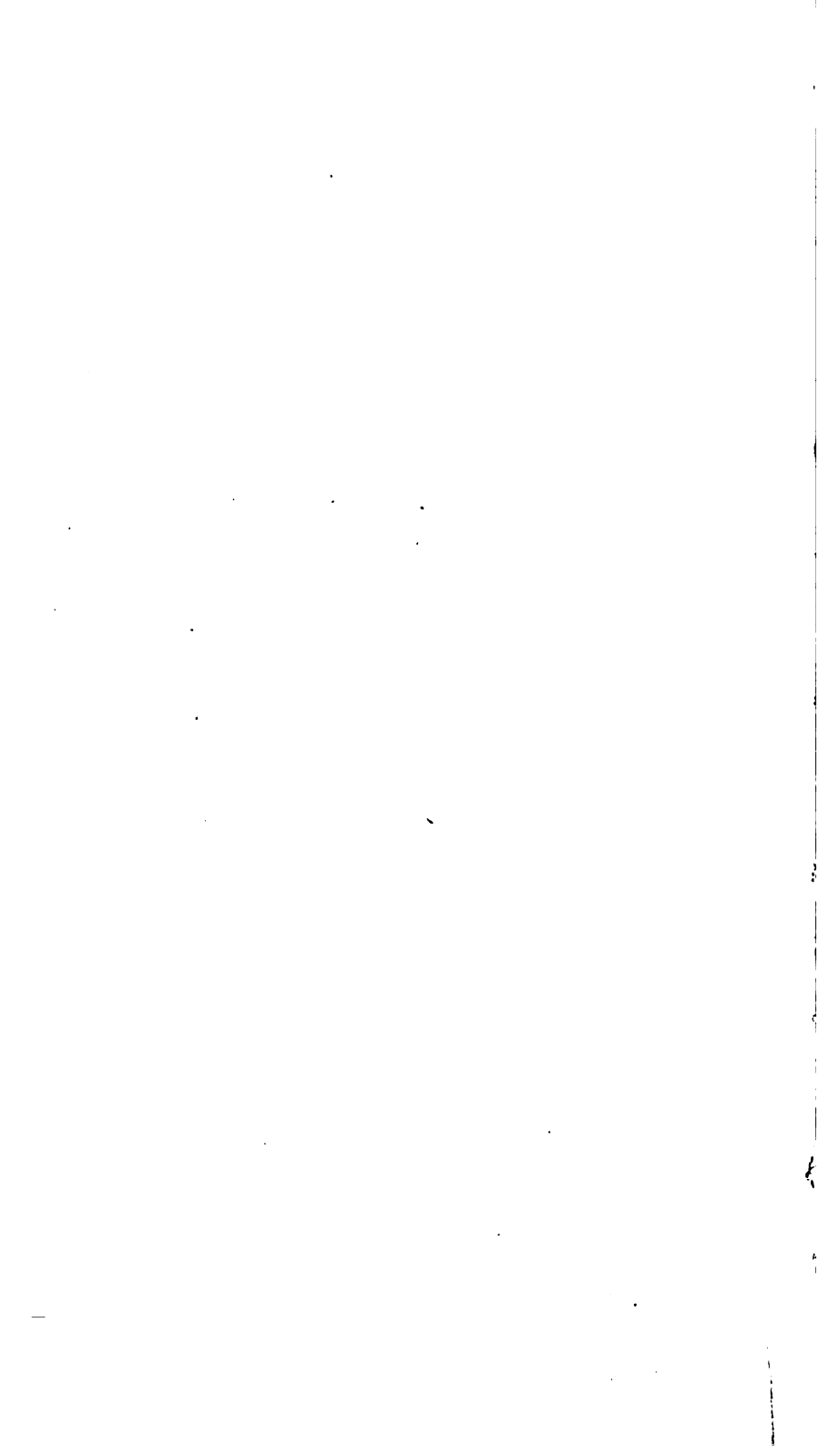
peut-être, mais à coup sûr la plus compliquée, suffiroient sans doute pour remplir tous mes momens. Observez, messieurs, qu'elle réunit tous les genres d'intérêt, tous les autres genres d'administration, outre ceux qui lui sont propres ; qu'elle embrasse dans ses détails les hommes de toutes les nations, de toutes les couleurs, de tous les préjugés, les militaires de toutes les armes, qu'elle nécessite toutes les espèces de comptabilité, qu'elle exige sur tous ces objets la vigilance la plus active et la plus soutenue. Jugez s'il est possible que l'homme chargé de cette tâche immense, et qui s'y livre tout entier, ose espérer de la remplir, s'il est sans cesse détourné de ces grands intérêts, par des dénunciations multipliées et minutieuses, au point de dégrader le moyen puissant et nécessaire de la dénonciation fondée. Et ne croyez pas, messieurs, que je veuille par-là détourner vos regards de celle qui existe contre moi ; je veux seulement prémunir votre sagesse contre celles que nous attendons tous, et qui seront nombreuses sans doute, parce que

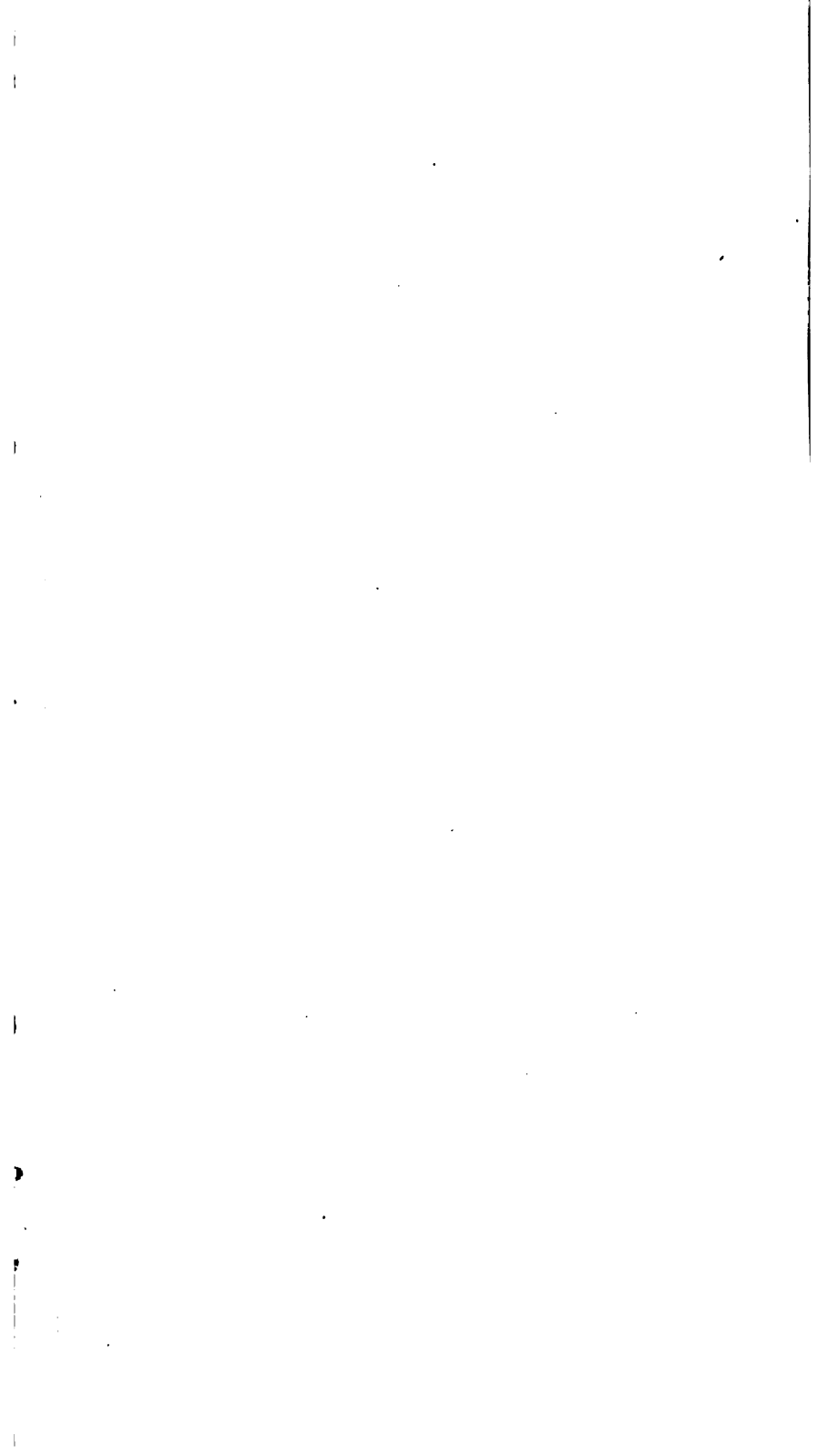
notre sévère exactitude à faire exécuter les nouvelles loix, et à réformer les abus qu'elles ont condamnés, ne manquera pas de susciter contre nous tous les individus qui vivoient de ces abus, et qui souffriront de ces réformes. Vous croirez sans peine, Messieurs, que ces mêmes individus seroient nos prôneurs les plus zélés, si moins occupés de l'intérêt national que des intérêts particuliers, nous étions capables de composer avec les principes, et de ne pas envisager l'estime publique, comme la seule récompense que des ministres citoyens puissent ambitionner.

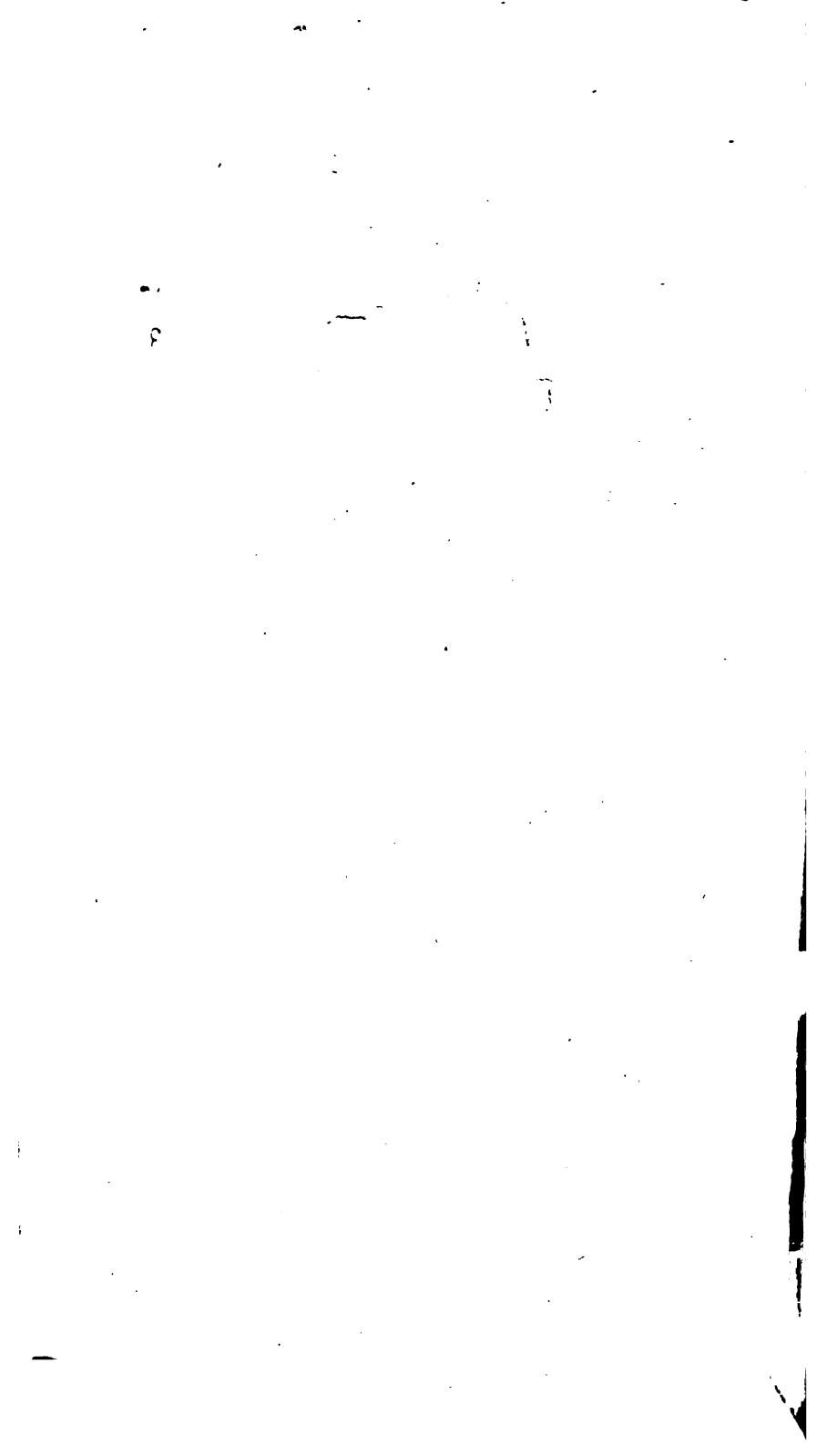
END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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